# AWARDS SPECIAL!

GAME OF THE YEAR: OUR CLOSEST RACE EVER! GUESS WHO WON?

# PSM

FEBRUARY 2005. ISSUE 84.

WORLD'S BEST SELLING PS2 MAG!

100% INDEPENDENT PLAYSTATION 2 MAGAZINE

## WE'VE GOT IT!

**EXCLUSIVE**

METAL GEAR 3 DIRECTOR'S COMMENTARY

**REVIEWED:**

CHAMPIONS: RETURN TO ARMS
MERCENARIES
THE PUNISHER
SUIKODEN IV
THE GETAWAY: BLACK MONDAY

**MILITARY MADNESS!**

SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY
MEDAL OF HONOR: DOGS OF WAR
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# FRONT PAGE

## PSP! PSP! WHOOOOO!

Now, I know that you guys are used to hearing us scream about *this* cool thing and *that* cool thing, but I want even the most jaded gamers to understand something very clearly: PSP is going to rock you — *rock you like a hurricane*. From the moment you pull Sony's sexy beast out of the box, you'll be in love. Forget the so-so battery life, or that some of the first games have long load times — it doesn't matter. Trust me, you're gonna *love* PSP!

**CHRIS SLATE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

**CHRIS SLATE**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**FAVORITE GAMES** Platformers, third-person action, arcade-style racing

**SUCKER FOR** Goofy games, NES-era nostalgia, cool character designs

**OTHER INTERESTS** Comics *(Livewires!)*, anime, action flicks, drawing, Angela!

"The American PSP release might just be the best game hardware launch we've ever seen. There usually aren't many great games when a system comes out, but the Japanese launch had three: *Ridge Racers*, *Hot Shots Golf* and *Lumines* — plus, others like *Metal Gear AC!D* came out shortly after. By the time the system hits here early next year, we'll have added plenty more to that list. It's a great time to be a gamer!"

**RANDY NELSON**
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

**FAVORITE GAMES** Platformers, first-person shooters, racers

**SUCKER FOR** Retro remakes, classics compilations, and anything by Hideki Kamiya

**OTHER INTERESTS** *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, cats, Kari!

"For a moment there this issue, I thought I really had travelled into the future. I mean, when a box arrives containing something that looks like it belongs on the set of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and plays games that make my recently purchased Nintendo DS seem antiquated, I have to wonder. But it's here, now, and the PSP is amazing. For that reason, this was definitely one of my favorite issues to work on."

**ERIC BRATCHER**
SENIOR EDITOR

**FAVORITE GAMES** RPGs, horror, everything old-school, modern action/adventures

**SUCKER FOR** Fishing games and anything odd, especially if it's Japanese

**OTHER INTERESTS** Mrs. Bratcher, music, giant monster movies, science

"Technology moves quickly. For instance, how crazy is it that I can use the internet to find out virtually anything I want to know in mere seconds? How crazy is it that I'm currently wearing a pair of 5.1 surround sound *headphones*? Finally, how crazy is it that Nintendo's DS is cutting-edge now, but is gonna to look as antiquated as a Game & Watch the minute the stronger, sexier, just plain better PSP hits town? Crazy."

**KAISER HWANG**
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**FAVORITE GAMES** Half-Life, Scrabble, N, the quiet game, peek-a-boo

**SUCKER FOR** Games that I can play for five minutes at a time

**OTHER INTERESTS** Shabu shabu, photos, sur si rang, Yemi, Kansas

"Even after playing the PSP in Tokyo, I couldn't help but dote it again once our office units came in. (Did the screen look *that* good last time I saw it?) After having played my DS every day since its launch, I felt myself really understanding what Nintendo was/is trying to do. After spending more time with the PSP, I'm not sure if it matters anymore. Suddenly, the world has new expectations for portable gaming. Think about it."

**BILL DONOHUE**
MANAGING EDITOR

"PSP means only one thing to me: Pretty special Person... and that would have to be Genny G!"

**DAN FITZPATRICK**
ART DIRECTOR

"I've almost finished my first original song, so keep an eye out for my deluxe world tour. Rock on!"

**GARY LIEW**
ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR

"If I could talk right now, I'd tell you I am holding my breath, but I can't talk right now."

## GET IN THE MAG WITH PSM ONLINE!

PSM is more than what you're holding in your hands. It also has a companion web site, **psmonline.com**, that's your gateway to the polls, contests, and interaction with the PSM staff, game makers, and other PSM readers that appear in our pages every month. If you don't check it out, you're missing out!

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**PSM IS** devoted to giving our readers what they deserve: the absolute *best* coverage *anywhere* of everything that matters to PlayStation gamers, because we love it just as much as you do.

**WE WILL** give the games that matter to you, the hardcore gamer, the in-depth coverage they demand. We will *only* review games when they're ready, after we've beaten them; we'll pull no punches with our verdicts and stand behind them 100%. We will dig deeper behind the big stories, and never settle for "just okay" with anything we do. When we make a promise, we'll keep it. When we make a mistake, we'll admit it. We will surprise you and always strive to give you more.

**WE WON'T** waste your time with movie or music reviews. We won't waste space interviewing celebrities who know *jack* about games, in some lame attempt to look cool. You know what? *Games* are cool. We don't care about being kid-tested and mother-approved, and we'll *never* hesitate to call B.S. when necessary.

**WE'RE PSM,** we're fiercely independent, and we're all about making the best damn PlayStation mag you've ever read!


# PSM

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FEBRUARY 2005 ISSUE 94

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SAMANTHA BERG

## THE PSM 10

## THE PSM TOP TEN GAMES AWARDS

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*- XBN*

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*- Game Informer*

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# MISSING IN ACTION

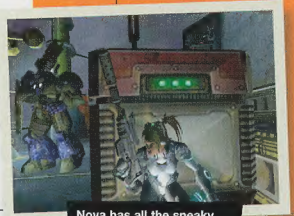
## PSM uncovers what happened to five of PS2's most promising games

Here at PSM, we get lots of email. Some of it is about games. Most of it involves enlarging the male member. This story is not about the latter.

No, it's about a special type of mail we get. A kind of "missing persons report," if you will, only about games. A missing *games* report. This month, our inbox finally filled, sending our IT guys into a fury, so we decided it was time to do something about it. To put on our Sherlock Holmes hats (you should see Chris in his! What a dork— ack!) and solve the mystery of these games' whereabouts.

Some of what we turned up is good, some will dissapoint, but now at least we have some closure.

## STARCRAFT: GHOST



Nova has all the sneaky moves of Solid Snake, and looks much better in tight clothing.

Blizzard's action game set in the *StarCraft* universe was announced at Tokyo Game Show *2002!* Since then, its lead character has undergone a couple of redesigns and the game has changed developers. It was shown at last year's E3, but has pretty much vanished from the radar.

**The Good News:** Developer Swingin' Ape is still working away on the game (they made the sleeper hit *Metal Arms: Glitch In The System*).

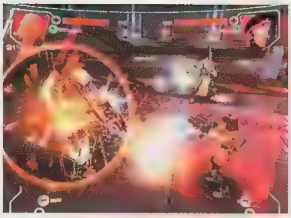
**The Bad News:** There's still no release date. We want Nova! (right ▶)

## FAR CRY: INSTINCTS

We thought this FPS, based on the awesome PC game looked too good to be true last E3... *and it was!*

**The Good News:** Ubisoft Montreal *(Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory)* is still working on it.

**The Bad News:** All their resources have gone to getting the Xbox version out by April, putting PS2 in the lurch.



## THE RED STAR

Wait — a really good, old-school-rific 3D shooter from Acclaim? Surely a sign of the end times. And it was, for Acclaim.

**The Good News:** The game exists in finished form. We've got it!

**The Bad News:** No one has picked up the publishing rights, and no one's sniffing around for them, either.

## JUICED

Another surprise from Acclaim, but this street racer fared better than its shoot-'em-up counterpart.

**The Good News:** THQ has picked the game up — it's going to be released.

**The Bad News:** It won't be out until sometime this summer, even though it's finished, to avoid *NFSU2* and *GT4*.

## SOUND OFF!

Which one of these "missing" games are you still the most excited about? That's the question we asked visitors to psmonline.com, and here's what they had to say.

## FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

Abaddon is still set to go Old Testament on bad guys... and use plenty of hair product.

# NEWS & VIEWS

**The News:** Renowned illustrator and PSM cover artist Greg Horn recently released the aptly titled, 144-page *"The Art Of Greg Horn,"* available in second printing at bookstores across the nation for 25 clams. If your bookstore doesn't accept clams, $24 in cash money will suffice.

The Views: Does the art of Greg seriously, though, this talented artist/illustrator has done a lot more game-related images than his cover [illegible] which can be found in the book. [illegible] There's even a page by Greg [illegible] the creative process, for all you aspiring game artists and artist-wannabes out there. Cool!

**The News:** KOEI has another *Dynasty Warriors* in the oven... and it's not for PS3. In fact, *Dynasty Warriors 5* is the works for PS2, and is currently scheduled for release at the end of March — fittingly right around the time *Dynasty Warriors* PSP will release in [illegible].

The Views: We're thrilled KOEI does something to shake up the formula this time around — maybe we can [illegible] some PS2 [illegible] connectivity between the PSP [illegible] versions.

# SACKED! EA NABS NFL

The "Madden dynasty" is now officially the "Madden monopoly." Hey, that's a license that could sell!

## Madden will be the *only* NFL game through at least 2010

No, April 1 hasn't come early this year. Electronic Arts, not content to merely outsell every other football game on the market every year, has inked a deal with the NFL to ensure that *Madden* will be the *only* NFL football game for the next five years.

### The Details

Nobody's willing to say how much EA paid for this, but an unnamed industry insider told the New York Times the deal was worth more than $300 million. The deal can be summed up as follows: No other company can make football games featuring NFL teams, players, or stadiums. So, basically, no one else can make real football games. For five years. Then, maybe more.

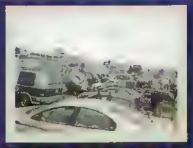
### The Impact

Take-Two, which distributed *ESPN NFL 2K5* for Sega, had this to say: "We believe that the decisions of the NFL and PLAYERS INC. to grant an exclusive license for videogames do a tremendous disservice to the consumers and sports fans whose funds ultimately support the NFL, by limiting their choices, curbing creativity, and almost certainly leading to higher game prices." Let's hope that innovation doesn't get sidelined — EA knows all eyes will be on them.

## What's next for the rest?

**ESPN 2K6**

Think you have what it takes to run the cable sports leader? Prove it! You write and produce shows like *Sportscenter* while keeping a close eye on the Nielsen ratings.



**GAMEDAY '06**

Think of it as a sort of *"Sim Sports Fan."* Get your family of football lovers ready for their day at the game, set up the ultimate tailgate party, and be sure to clean up.



**BLITZ 20-06**

Combining *Psi-Ops* and *The Suffering*, teams of telekenetic monsters square off on prison yards and military bases, using mind-powers to pull off crazy plays.

# SMART-BOMB: PUNISHER'S NEW PAL

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Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

*Online play not available on all platforms. INTERNET CONNECTION required for online play. PlayStation®2 online play requires Internet Connection, Network Adapter (for PlayStation 2) and Memory Card (8MB) (for PlayStation 2) (each sold separately). Check platform box for online play.

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# Pitch the Pros

*Your game ideas — reviewed by PS2's top game makers!*

## THIS MONTH'S PITCH:

# "Kart Ball"

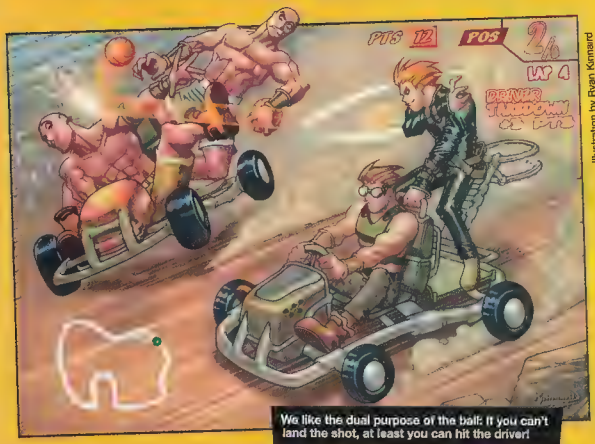



Illustration by Ryan Kinnard

We like the dual purpose of the ball: If you can't land the shot, at least you can hit the driver!

**Dear Pitch The Pros,**

*Kart Ball* combines the elements of a sports game with a racing game and fuses them together with a twisted concept. Every go-kart has two people in it. The passenger tries to shoot basketballs through a hoop attached to their opponents' karts — and at opposing drivers, themselves! The driver is responsible for dodging oncoming opponent shots and positioning his passenger to make the best shots.

I suppose that could be only mode within the overall game, which could include normal racing, kart ball, and destruction derby type matches. The possibilities for such a game are endless!

Not only is the idea fantastic, but the layout of the game is, too. Picture it inside your head: Levels with beautiful sparking waterfalls, golden statues, half-naked women screaming from the stands... and karts inside an arena smashing each other up and pegging each other with giant balls!

**—Wayne Fiorelli, Marlboro, NY**

## THIS MONTH'S PRO:

**Chris Charla**
**Senior Producer, Backbone Entertainment**
***Currently working on Death, Jr. for PSP***

*Kart Ball* sounds like a neat idea – I'm especially intrigued by the levels with the half-naked women, although I'm not sure what the ESRB would say! While this game sounds great on paper, the biggest issue is going to be tuning. And you have to realize, it may be untunable.

You definitely would need to do a prototype to see how hard it was to actually score baskets. Does the performance level of the kart mean that it's always easy to dodge? You can't downgrade the kart specs too much, because people know what to expect in a kart racer. You can "cheat" the shots a little, but again people know how shooting a basketball should feel, so you're limited there, too. So you have some constraints on how you can make it feel and you need to see if it can be fun inside those constraints. If so, it could be an excellent addition to a kart game.

If not, you might want to morph the idea into a straight up tag mode, where you can shoot paint balls or something with better ballistics to nail fast moving karts.

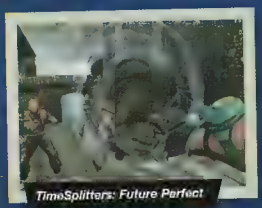
**VERDICT: GREEN LIGHT**

*Check out* ***psmonline.com*** *for details on how you can pitch the pros with your own game idea — and win a PSM prize pack, just like Toni!*

# What's up with fantasy FPSs?

## PSM hunts down PS2's small squad of non-military shooters

War is anything but Hell for game publishers. In fact, they're blissfully riding the wave of popularity that's washed military shooter after military shooter onto PS2's shores. The first-person shooter genre wasn't always guys in green camo; more often than not, you were shooting green aliens. Seeing that there are still plenty of wars to cover (what's next, *Battlefield 1812?*) many FPS diehards after a little separation between their games and the evening news are feeling out of luck. Fear not, though, since PS2 is still getting a handful of fantasy FPSs this year to get the taste of napalm out of our mouths. EA's ***TimeSplitters: Future Perfect,*** due in spring, is ratcheting the fast-paced, darkly-humorous series up a notch with a deeper story mode and online play. ***Darkwatch,*** before summer from Sammy Studios, casts players as a vampire gunslinger and even has horseback riding. Last, but definitely not least, Eidos's ***Project: Snowblind*** will throw players into the midst of a futuristic triad gangwar this March, complete with nano-tech bullets and the ability to take control of deadly robots. Now let's see any of those old-school WWII-era shooters do *that!*



*TimeSplitters: Future Perfect*

*Darkwatch*



*Project: Snowblind*

# TimeSplitters
FUTURE PERFECT

2052 A.D.

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BATTLE FROM 1920 TO 2450. JUMP THROUGH TIME TO SAVE YOUR PAST OR FUTURE SELF.

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EA GAMES

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TEEN
T
Mild Language
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

XBOX

PANDEMIC

PlayStation.2

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# >>INBOX

**CONFIRMED: NOT ALL THE E-MAIL WE GET IS SPAM!
VISIT PSMONLINE.COM TO GET IN TOUCH WITH US!**

**This month: *The Revenge of The Sith!* Actually, it's just the letters page, but you have to admit "The Sith" sounds better than "Letters." Actually, on second thought, "Sith" sounds pretty silly. So, I'm just going to call this edition *"Revenge of The Letters Section."* Be afraid! Or something. —Randy Nelson**

**Hey Guys!**
Long time reader, first time writer. Quick query. I'm a huge *Metal Gear* head, so I'm naturally stoked about *Snake Eater's* release next month. It was my hope that McFarlane toys would produce another series in their already established *MGS* action figure line. I've been monitoring their website, but they've yet to announce the existence of a *Snake Eater* toy line. Since y'all have your foot in more than a few doors, can you let us know if there will in fact be McFarlane created *MGS3* figs anytime soon? *—XA114*

**We were wondering the same thing, so we talked to Marc Franklin, head PR honcho at Konami, about the situation. Here's what he had to say: "Konami is making *MGS3* figures for Japan, but there's no set release date for them yet. We aren't working with McFarlane Toys this time around, and don't have plans for a U.S. line, but consumers will still be able to get the Japanese figures both online and through importers."**

THE SHIPPING COSTS WERE NUTS --
BUT DAMN IF BEING ABLE TO SAY I HAVE A SIX-FOOT SNAKE WASN'T WORTH IT!
TRUE DAT!
The RAH Snake even comes with removable ar

**Personally, we've got our eye on the 12" tall Real Action Heroes Snake, which features cloth camo and hits Japan in December for a worth-every-penny $167. Anyone who sends us one will be our Best Friend 4-Ever!**

psmonline.com

**Dear PSM,**
I like the way you guys have put the new magazine together. My only complaint is that you've taken out the letter answering section where you try to answer a person's letter in the best way you can to help them out (though I like the sarcastic answers you give). Thanks. *—Jonathon Veigh*

**Well, Jon (do you mind if I call you Jon? It's okay if you do, but I already called you it, so there's no turning back now), maybe if enough readers demand a letters page, we, being the nice guys we are, will give it to you. Maybe.**

**Hey PSM Dudes,**
I think games should let you make your own gun, like so you can make a M-16 shoot grenades instead of bullets, or have a machine gun shoot shotgun shells. *—TLpenguin92*

**Yeah, that's... um... cool...? Maybe it would be a better idea to make a gun that shoots your medicine down your throat first, however, since, not to be rude or anything, you've obviously missed a dose.**
**Just remember: "You can do it!"**

**Hi There,**
I was wondering, when are game makers going to turn *Rurouni Kenshin, Ranma 1/2, Evangelion, Trigun,* and other anime into video games in the United States? *—Kirksey*

**Yo PSM,**
Why is it that [illegible] I see are always in high resolution and look much better than the game a[illegible] *—Wes Goss*

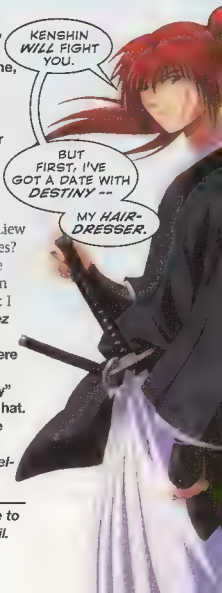
**Sometimes, it's because developers grab them straight from dev hardware. Other times, it's because they're Photoshopped by developers, because the game looks like ass in reality.**

**Does *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent* really look this nice and sharp in action? NO.**

**We're with ya, Kirksey. Japanese gamers have — not surprisingly — had their share of anime games, while we get *Gungrave* and *DBZ*. Sega was working on a *Trigun* game, but it's gone M.I.A. They recently announced a 3D samurai fighter called *Shinsengumi Gunrou-den* with characters by *Kenshin* creator Nobuhiro Watsuki. No U.S. release plans yet.**

**Hi Guys,**
I just wanted to ask why does Gary Liew always wear a hat in all of his pictures? Also, do you guys remember a PSone game called *Intelligent Cube?* I've been trying to get my paws on a copy, but I can't find it anywhere! *—Nicky Lopez*

**Have you ever seen *Total Recall,* where that guy has a mutant "twin" in his chest? Replace "that guy" with "Gary" and "chest" with "head." Hence, the hat.**
**You're going to have to scrounge bargain bins for *IQ* — I have a copy, but, get this: it's protected by an *intelligent cube.***



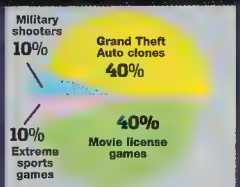

***Randy is currently on sick leave due to paper cuts from opening your e-mail.***

# SOUND BYTES

The question of the month at the psmonline.com forums was "Which game genre most deserves to die?" Here's a look at the poll results, along with some of the comments our forum members had to offer.

## POLL RESULTS

**Which genre deserves to die?**




Go to **psmonline.com** to participate in our next poll and submit your Sound Bytes!

"I'm gonna have to go with *GTA* clones. The "clones" that come out following in the footsteps of the *GTA* series, never do it bigger or better, so what's the point of having them?"
–P_S_Msubscriber

"This one's easy. Movie License Games. 95% of them are crap, the other 5% are turds."
–subjuteking

"I am going with movie games. Games based on movies or movies based on games are almost always crap. A movie has a set path; the characters will always do the same thing where a game you can play in many different ways. A long movie might be 3 hours long where a short game is 8 or 9; a movie is just not long enough to tell the story of a game."
–Dragon_Of_Blood

"I voted for extreme sports. Don't get me wrong – I like extreme sports, but, to me, once you have played one you have played them all."
–BrokenHeartOfATraitor

"*GTA* clones. Because they always fail at being better than what they're trying to copy. Sort of like real cloning!" –Helghast

"Movies games have to go. They leave a bad taste in my mouth when I play them. Like I just kissed a dog's ass or something."
–drJupmushroom

"Movie games. Do we really need another *King Arthur*?"
–SweettoothTKC

Make sure to visit our forums at psmonline.com to take part in next month's Sound Bytes poll!

# Ask a Stupid QUESTION...

## THE 800-POUND GORILLA ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

The following are actual, unedited reader e-mails. E-mail addresses have been removed to protect the clueless.

**READER:** Are you sure you're not lying about the PS3 thing you were talking about in the Holiday 2004 issue? Because I don't know... something makes me think you were lying out of your shorts.
—Evan Dandridge

**BILL:** Evan, Evan, Evan... when are you ever going to learn that, in my position as a thoughtful, caring adult, I'm not allowed to lie! Everything I tell you in this column is the honest truth. Trust me on this one. Now, on another note, what are these "shorts" that you speak of?

It's true! Timothy Dalton's middle name is Algae... and his tongue is green, as well...

**READER:** Who do you guys think would win in a fight, The Ringwraiths from the *Lord of the Rings* games or the Dementors from the *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* game?
—Edge9725

**BILL:** Gee, Edge, that's kinda like asking who would win in a fight between you and your reflection in a mirror. You see, a Dementor is simply a Ringwraith 2.0. Bill Gates worked exclusively with Sauron on the new Evil OS upgrades, and the Dementors are the result. They work fairly well, but tend to crash if you send them out to wreak evil havoc on the Internet.

**READER:** Why is it that when you rub your eyes, it feels so good? I've rubbed my eyes for 45 minutes and it felt like heaven, but once I stopped, I entered hell. The agony was unbearable. Why should this happen?
—Name Withheld

**BILL:** If you keep rubbing your eyes for 45 minutes at a stretch, you'll eventually go blind. If you rub any other parts of your body for 45 minutes, you'll not only go blind, but hair will start to grow on your palms. *You've been warned!*

**READER:** What was the hardest PSM issue you guys ever had to pull off? Lack of info? Not enough pictures? Someone being sick? And if not, which was the easiest?
—Phillip Rodriguez

**BILL:** I'm not sure that "pull off" is the correct phrase to use, especially after that last letter, but to answer your question, the hardest issue of PSM to complete is always the next one, while the easiest is always the one you just finished. Hope that helps, Phil!

**READER:** You know that list you have under the rating of pros and cons in your reviews and each has some comical thematic reference as its title? WHAT WERE YOU THINKING USING TIMOTHY DALTON'S NAME TO HEAD THE CONS LIST? Timothy Dalton is an extremely close second to Sean Connery. George Lazenby or Roger Moore would have been more appropriate, but then again I guess its not your fault, you're gamers; cultural information like the hierarchy of Bond actors is probably not one of your fortes.
—Forrest Johnson

**BILL:** Listen up, Timothy... I mean, "Forrest," just about everyone knows that there's a hierarchy of James Bonds. For any of our readers who may be clueless, here it is:

OFFICIAL 007 HIERARCHY LIST
Sean Connery . . . . . James Bond
Roger Moore . . . . . The Saint
George Lazenby . . . . Mr. Ed
Timothy Dalton . . . . Pond Scum

So you see, Timothy... I mean, "Forrest", we were correct in our usage. Write when you find work!

**Send your questions to bdonohue@futurenetworkusa.com, with "800-pound gorilla" in the subject line.**

# RANTS & RAVES

**RANT** "I don't get the new "PStwo" at all. Two reasons why: 1) Even though it's one inch the size of the original PS2, it looks bad. You can also tell Sony cut costs (but kept the price the same) by making a flip-top lid instead of keeping the motorized disc tray. I personally don't like it at all! 2) It doesn't support the HDD. If Sony really cared about their customers they would have not said anything about the "PStwo" until they found some way to integrate it, or make something that could allow the use of the HDD. I personally don't have an HDD, but customers would have been a lot happier."
–Scott K., via e-mail

**RANT** "Why aren't there more downloads for the PS2 games? It feels like developers are neglecting the possibility of adding downloadable content (with the exception of games like *SOCOM 2* and *MGS3*) which would make the games even better or more fun to play. The only downloads most of the online games get are just updates. Developers please deliver the downloadable content goods!"
–Bob Fredrick, San Jose

**RANT** "I'm really tired of how the market is being flooded by all these war shooters. It was okay when it was just *Medal of Honor* and say, *Commandos*, but now every other game released is a war game. First it was WWII games, then some Gulf War titles, and now we have Vietnam games? Oh, and now there's the new *Ghost Recons* and *Killzone*, which take place during fictitious wars. When developers need to start making up wars to make games about, the genre is tired. I say its high time developers started to get creative and try something new again."
–Chris, via e-mail

**RAVE** "It's actually nice to see some of the great holiday games pushed backed until spring 2005. Now I've got two great reasons to look forward to the winter and spring of 2005: great games and the PSP. I'm going to be in gaming heaven in 2005!"
–Bob Fredrick, San Jose

**RAVE** "I am very happy to see the 800-pound gorilla back in the pages of PSM. He turns me on."
–Samantha B., Undisclosed

# FANDOM

**Step up and share your mad love for PS2 with the world!**

A

*Guilty Gear X* group cosplay from **Tokyogeist (Venom).**

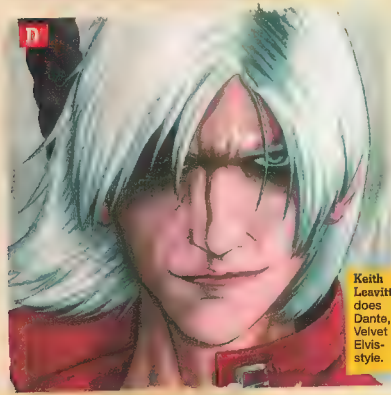
B

*Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven* by the badical **Eri Gaudiamo**

C

**Alexandria Rosales** makes her own custom *Final Fantasy* jewelry!

D



**Keith Leavitt** does Dante, Velvet Elvis-style.

## HIT US WITH YOUR BEST STUFF!

Get over to **psmonline.com** and submit your displays of fandom — fan art, cosplay, custom toys... you name it, we want it! The best of the best will be displayed here each issue!

## CAST A VOTE FOR YOUR FAVE FANDOM!

That's right — we're taking our fandom section to the next level. Here's how it works: load up the PSM web site at **www.psmonline.com** and cast your vote for which of this month's fandom submissions is the best. We'll announce the winner in the March issue, and they'll score a hefty PSM prize pack.

## JANUARY'S BEST FANDOM!

The readers have voted, and the winner of the PSM prize pack goes to **NATALIE** for her Zhu Rong cosplay from *Dynasty Warriors 4*! May we suggest you don't greet FedEx in that outfit.

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*Your lessons start 'ere, mate!*

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*Cars, cops, scumbags, guns...and a little bit of sex. Wanna take a look?

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Drug Reference
Intense Violence
Nudity
Sexual Themes
Strong Language

PlayStation.2

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# CALENDAR

## PSM PLAYLIST

**CHRIS**

*Metal Gear Solid 3*, baby! I won't put that sucker down until I've played through *at least* a dozen times! (Well, except for when I'm playing *Ridge Racers* on my PSP, of course!)

**RANDY**

After *MGS3*, I've gone back and played through *MGS1* and *MGS2*... and *Snake Eater*'s still my fave. Other than that, I've been logging mad hours on *Ridge Racers* on my PSP, and looking forward to the fast-approaching *God of War!*

**ERIC**

There have been so many awe-some games lately... *Metal Gear Solid 3* and *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within* rock, and the RPG'er in me is loving *Growlanser: Generations* — if you're old school, do NOT miss this one. If only *Atari Anthologies* had a little online mul-tiplayer action...

**KAISER**

The new year is here and I'm still trying to 100% *GTA*. Sad, I know. Luckily, I also have *The Punisher* to help satiate my need for violent videogames and ease the time before *Winning Eleven 8*, *Darkwatch*, and *Chaos Theory* ship.

**JUSTIN**

I'm still getting through the end-of-the-year games, and I'm playing through *MGS 3* yet again. What a beautiful, amazing, awe-inspiring game. Looking towards the future, I'm really looking forward to play-ing *God of War* and *Gran Turismo 4* — if the latter ever comes out...

## READER PLAYLIST

**AKRAM SABER**

I just completed *Metal Gear Solid 3*, and all I can say is wow; I'm still playing *GTA: San Andreas*. I've also managed to sneak in some *Socom II* online.

## FEBRUARY

**2/1**

**World Soccer Winning Eleven 8**
PSM Pick: Footy fans are going to have a field day with the latest in Konami's world-class series of soccer games.
Savage Safari Hunt
Music Maker
Sega Hits Phantasy Star Trilogy

**2/8**

**NBA Street 3**
PSM Pick: One of PS2's greatest multiplayer games is back, faster and prettier than ever.

Winnie the Pooh Rumbly Tumbly
Death by Degrees
Shadow of Rome
Ys Ark of Napishtim
Constantine
Motocross Mania 3
Outlaw Volleyball
Phantom Crash 2050

**2/10**

**Champions: Return to Arms**
PSM Pick: Turn a blind eye to turn-based RPGs and hack your way to four-player online adventure.

**2/14**

MX vs. ATV Unleashed

**2/15**

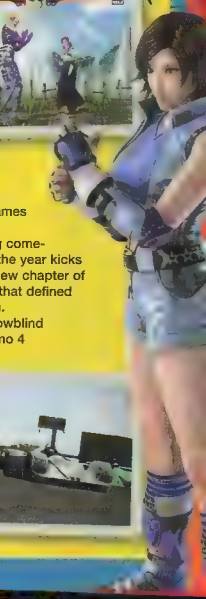
Brothers in Arms
Sega Classics Collection
Nano Breaker
Digital Devil Saga: Avatar Tuner
King of Fighters 02/03
Tenchu: Fatal Shadows
Xenosaga II

**2/19**

Wild Arms: Alter Code F

**2/22**

**Tekken 5**
PSM Pick: Fighting games are making another big come-back, and the year kicks off with a new chapter of the fighter that defined PlayStation.
Project Snowblind
Gran Turismo 4




## OUTLOOK

**3/1**
MLB 2006
MVP Baseball 2005
Kessen III
Notorious: Die to Drive
Cold Fear
Digimon World 4
NARC
25 To Life
Super Monkey Ball DX
Musashi Samurai Legend

**3/3**
The Shield
Darkwatch

**3/8**
TimeSplitters: Future Perfect
FIFA Street
Rugby 2005
Enthusia Pro Racing
Devil May Cry 3

**3/14**
Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory
The Fast and the Furious

**3/15**
God of War
Rise of the Kasai
World Tour Soccer 2006
ESPN MLB 2K5
Stolen
Resident Evil Outbreak 2

**3/21**
Fight Night 2

**3/22**
Dragonball Z: Sagas

**3/29**
Red Ninja: End of Honor

**3/31**
The Warriors
Virtual Pool Tournament

**4/1**
Dead to Rights II: Hell to Pay
Area 51

**4/5**
Outlaw Tennis

**4/12**
Predator: Concrete Jungle

**4/14**
Fahrenheit
Final Fantasy XII

**4/15**
Metal Slug 4 & 5

**4/19**
Cold Winter

**4/26**
Lego Star Wars

## PSM READERS MOST WANTED

1. Final Fantasy XII
2. Kingdom Hearts II
3. Dirge of Cerberus: FFVII
4. Gran Turismo 4
5. Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening
6. Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory
7. God of War
8. Tekken 5
9. Burnout 4
10. Wanda and The Colossus

PSNEXT devotees will recall Mr. X's interview in PSM #92, where he spilled the beans on PS3 *Madden*.

The *Need For Speed* mock-up is nice, but not earth-shattering.

# A Glimpse of The Future

## What will PS3 games look like? EA has an idea

What you're looking at isn't actual gameplay, but rather a "best guess" of what PlayStation 3 and its next-generation competitors will be capable of, graphics-wise, according to Electronic Arts.

The shot of *Madden* (above) and *Need For Speed* (right) were released as part of an EA presentation on the future of the company and where it sees gaming heading. Of the two shots, *Madden* is clearly the more impressive; *NFS* looks almost like racer running on a high-end PC (and very well could be). *Madden*, however, showcases advanced normal mapping, depth of field, and pixel-shading effects that should be well within the capabilities of the PS3 (see the boxout to the right for more on the 3D powerhouse it will have under the hood).

How close should we really expect PS3 to come to these mock-ups? Just based on early details, *Madden* is certainly not beyond the realm of possibility, and *GT5* will probably make that *NFS* shot look a generation behind when it's unveiled. Exciting stuff — and more to come!

INSIDE THE PS3

## 2 x 50 = 3

### PS3 graphics chip stunner!

How did anyone keep a secret a huge Sony and Nvidia joining forces to create the PS3 GPU (graphics processor unit) under wraps for two years? Well, telling people what solution, positively not working together was — if we want to be really shady.

So, what's so big about this news? Well, Nvidia is an expert at designing super-powered graphics chips for PCs (and they also designed Xbox's GPU), and they're really upping the ante with PS3. The chip they are creating will be custom, and according to Nvidia's president, somewhere in the neighborhood of 50 (yes, 50) times more powerful than PS2's GPU.

Why, does Sony make its own chip? Developers we've spoken with tell us that it was a matter of Sony being behind the curve regarding 3D features like pixel-shading, which weren't even a part of PS2, despite being commonplace on PCs. Nothing's for sure, Nvidia is putting its all into the chip, and has even hinted at new visuals for the PS3 already in the works.

## ANSWERS FROM THE FUTURE!

**Once a month, we get a call from Randy... from the year 2025! If you've got a PSP or PS3 question, he's got your answer — from the future!**

If the PSP has online, will it cost ant money? —*James Marchio*
**Randy 2025:** The PSP does indeed have online (and by "online," I'm guessing you mean online play). However, it doesn't cost ant money (thank goodness — it's all sticky, since it's made from, like, sugar and stuff) but you will need to pay human money if you're out and about and want to go online at a hotspot (such as T-Mobile's) that have a per-hour charge. If you have a wireless router at home, you'll be able to connect wirelessly without any charges.

Will the PS3's graphics be better then the Xbox's current graphics? —*Mike C.*
**Randy 2025:** "Better" is not an acceptable term to use in describing them. "So f'n better your head will explode," however, is fine, if not a little understated.

Will the PSP have a mini HDD drive to play online games? —*Jerott Otto*
**Randy 2025:** No. Did you know that, in the future, "HDD" is actually a put-down? Like "Dude, your gear is SO HDD!" Anyway, you'll actually use Memory Stick Pro Duos to save information you download from the 'net.

Will the PS3 have a VGA output, so we can play games or movies on a monitor in High Definition. —*C. Goomdman III*
**Randy 2025:** The PS3 has native progressive-scan support for HD displays via traditional component video out. Oh, BTW, C. Goodman IV told me to say "hi."

In the future, will the PSP have an extended battery life? Also, will there be different colors for PSP? —*Kyle W.*
**Randy 2025:** Why extend the battery life when you can just get people to shell out $40 a pop for extra batteries? I personally wear a bandolier strapped with the things. As for colors, the system launches in black, with additional colors only becoming available a year or so after it hits the U.S.

Will there be a PS4? —*Mike Conrad*
**Randy 2025:** Not exactly. By the time it comes out, PlayStation is the only console on the market, so they just call it Game Machine 4.

Is it true that the PS3 will future a DNA cell processor? —*Antoine Damian*
**Randy 2025:** You're thinking of that thing they use on *C.S.I.* (or *C.S.I. 2025*, as it's now known).

Well, I've gotta get the flatbed hover-truck and haul my 20-hour PSP battery pack into storage, so I'll catch you guys IN THE FUTURE!

*Have a question about the PSP or PS3? Head to* ***psmonline.com*** *to send it our way!*

A Million Ways to Fight.
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M
Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Sexual Themes
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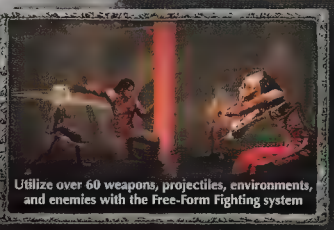
# Prince of Persia Warrior Within

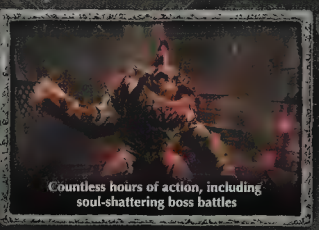
## One Killer Deal.

**"10 OUT OF 10"** - PSM
**"9.6 OUT OF 10"** - OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE
**"9.25 OUT OF 10"** - GAME INFORMER
**"9.0 OUT OF 10"** - GMR
**"4.5 OUT OF 5"** - GAMEPRO
**"A-"** - PLAY

2003's Game of the Year* returns to further push the boundaries of gaming



Utilize over 60 weapons, projectiles, environments, and enemies with the Free-Form Fighting system



Countless hours of action, including soul-shattering boss battles

Even when you've been sentenced to death by a demonic incarnation of Fate, you still have choices. And with the power to develop your own combat style using countless weapons, environmental objects, and whatever enemy crosses your path, there's no telling what your warrior within will unleash next. You can't run from Fate. But with this much freedom, you can stop it dead in its tracks.

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princeofpersiagame.com

*Game of the Year: Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences, *U.S. Official PlayStation Magazine, Electronic Gaming Monthly, Official Xbox Magazine* (Staff Pick), *PSE2*

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LIVE BY THE CODE.
OR DIE BY IT.

# MILITARY MADNESS

Is it just us, or are military themes the new import tuner genre? Okay, so the military backdrop has always been a staple in games, but with most major franchise sequels already released last year, it's a suspicious coincidence that a number of big 2005 releases all share a common bond: war action. Here's a look at the biggest and best of what's to come. **KAISER HWANG**

**DELTA FORCE: BLACKHAWK DOWN**

**PUBLISHED BY** NovaLogic

**MADE BY** Rebellion

**WHAT IS THIS?** A recreation of the infamous event, FPS style

**IT COMES OUT** March-May

**ESRB** Pending

**MULTIPLAYER** 1-32 players 2-player co-op

**ONLINE** Yes

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

## Delta Force: Blackhawk Down

**The world's first 32-player PS2 game was shown, and we lived to talk about it. A PSM world exclusive!**

You've probably seen the movie. Hell, you've maybe even played the PC game bearing the same name.

### Deja vu? Not quite

Funny thing, then, that *Black Hawk Down* on the PS2 is not based on either the movie or the PC (and soon to be Xbox) game. Sure, the game's inevitably going to crossover with the events in the movie (they are based on the same event, after all), and the game is being published by military game veteran NovaLogic just like the PC and Xbox games, but that's where similarities end.

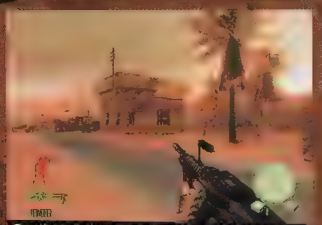
Developed by Oxford-based Rebellion, *DF: BHD* takes players into the harsh, heat-drenched war zones of Mogadishu. The game is unsurprisingly a first-person shooter, featuring light squad-based tactics, complete with voice commands issued through a USB headset. Day, night, and even railed vehicle sequences offer some variety to the gameplay, forcing you to change up your tactics and equipment load outs.

After playing numerous missions in the campaign, one thing really caught our attention - the scale of the game. At first glance, the tan- and mud-colored worlds seem drab and unremarkable, but after battling your way through one terrorist-infested shanty-town after another, you get a real sense of how large the maps really are.

The visuals on a whole are deceivingly well done. Sharp textures, especially on the character models, give life to the mono worlds of camo and sand, and a sexy heat distortion effect makes you sweat, even in your air-conditioned Malibu condo. Topping things off is

**FYI: A portion of the game's proceeds will be donated to the Special Operations Warrior Foundation.**

Just about every weapon has a zoom feature that gives you better aim and looks cool doing it.

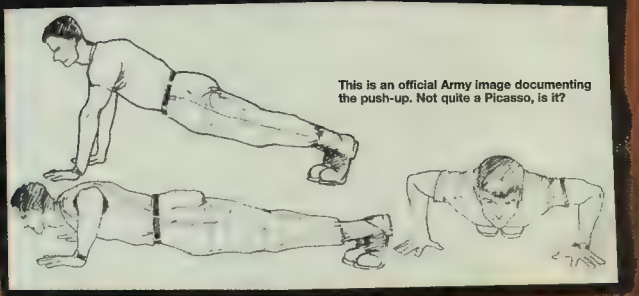


See those buildings in the distance? You can actually walk there in real time sans loading.

DROP AND GIVE ME 20

# Exercise Exercise Revolution

Ordering your squad mates to take point is one thing. Ordering them to exercise on command is another. Using a USB headset, you'll be able to command soldiers to perform jumping jacks, and even push-ups, on a whim. Why? We're not sure if there's any *real* reason to do so, but damn, it sure is funny. Here's hoping for more special voice commands when the game ships.



This is an official Army image documenting the push-up. Not quite a Picasso, is it?

a soft haze overlaying the visuals, at once creating an illusion of heat, and the stuff that dreams are made of. In short, this is one of the best looking military games on the PS2.

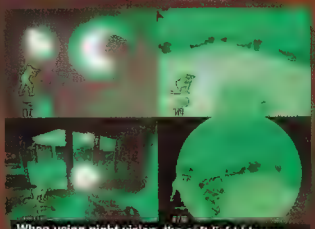
## Three's a crowd, 32's damn chaos

To stand out in any overrun genre, it's gong to take more than some nifty graphics and solid gameplay. Luckily, *BHD* can boldly claim to be the PS2's first and only 32-player online title — and we've played it.

Over the course of tens of missions, we fought our way through numerous deathmatches, capture the flag games, and team tag matches. Initially starting with player numbers in the teens, the game ran just as smooth as could be. Slowly adding players until we hit 32, the gameplay never slowed down or showed the slightest hint of lag. And for the record, we were playing over the internet as opposed to a LAN. Impressive indeed.

Outside of supporting 32 players, *Black Hawk Down's* multiplayer component also features voice chat during play, detailed rankings and statistics for each and every game you finish, maps that cater to small and large numbers of players as well as the type of mode you're playing, and even an offline 2-player co-op mode that runs without any noticeable hiccups or graphical degradations. With plenty of time for refining AI, polishing the few graphical 'ehs' that *are* there, and balancing both the single and multiplayer games, you could be looking at the game that finally makes you forget about *SOCOM*.

Ah, the old glory days of 4-player split-screen brought back to life in frag-worthy style.



When using night vision, the soft light blooms that appear rival even those in *Splinter Cell*.

Letting your squad take care of the baddies while you watch is always a safe and entertaining option. Oorah!

You can't really see it in this screenshot, but you're flying in a helicopter. No, really.

GET SMART

# Full Spectrum Warrior

## It's official — learning is a blast!

**FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR**

**PUBLISHED BY**
THQ

**MADE BY**
Mass Media

**WHAT IS THIS?**
A military training sim gone video-game

**IT COMES OUT**
March

**ESRB**
Pending

**MULTIPLAYER**
2 player co-op

**ONLINE**
Yes

Released earlier last year for both Xbox and PC, *Full Spectrum Warrior* is finally headed to Sony's little black box. Unlike most other games, you don't wander around in a first-person view aiming your weapon of choice at unrelenting foes. Instead, you issue orders to two teams of four RTS-style.

But don't expect the cumbersome top-down, micro-management of most strategy games. With a camera that's down in the action right along with your squads, the feeling you get while playing *FSW* is much like watching an intense war documentary where you're the cameraman — only *you* tell the soldiers what to do.

With aiming, moving, and shooting orders taken care of using an intuitive controller and onscreen layout, most of the gameplay focuses on you flexing your mad tactical skills; outflanking the enemy, giving suppression fire, knowing when and where to exercise which weapons. This is one game where brains weigh more than brawn. And it should, seeing as how the game is used by the U.S. Army as a training simulator.

That's right, developed by Pandemic Studios (*Star Wars Battlefront*, *Mercenaries*), *Full Spectrum Warrior* — or more specifically, a slightly harder variation of it — is a full-fledged military tool. What that means for all you armchair generals out there is that this is as real as it gets when it comes to urban warfare; you're put in very real situations and the way out alive is using very real solutions.

After spending some good time with the PS2 version of the game, we can definitely say it's shaping up to be a worthy port of the Xbox version. The impressive graphics and animations are largely intact, and most importantly, the gameplay is spot on. Better yet, the online co-op mode will be making it in, so you can bet we've got our rifles crossed and our Ethernet cables ready. Learn yourself some military tactics this March.

This gang of soldiers is only as smart as you are, so you better brush up on your tactical skills.

SIX 4 THREE 9

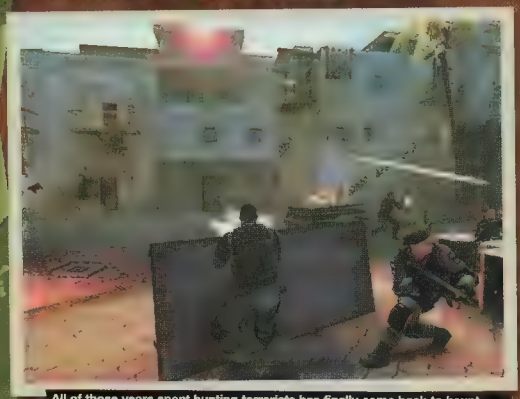
# Rainbow Six Lockdown

## Online and personal

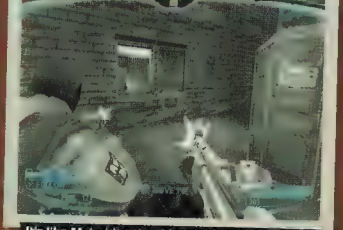
If you're an Xbox owner, the name "Rainbow Six" means a lot to you. If you're a PS2 owner, well, we all know what it's like getting hand-me-down ports. Enter *Rainbow Six Lockdown* (that's number four in the series for the uninitiated), the next game in the ongoing series of tactical shooters. Being developed for the PS2 with just as much, if not more, care than the Xbox game, it marks a radical change for the series.

Previous games have been good (some spectacular), but little has changed. Expect a heavy emphasis on story and character development, where you may actually shed a tear or two when one of your compadres dies. Excluding the marked change in plot, the game's visuals and gameplay have received a complete overhaul. Using a Metroid-like "vision-set" (they'll even steam up, get wet, and muddy!) really puts you in the action, and the innovative three-tier AI will make you question what the enemy's been eating for breakfast.

Along with a robust online mode that supports up to 16 players, there's also a four-player co-op mode, and numerous PS2-exclusive features and online modes. It looks like there may be a pot of gold at the end of this rainbow after all.



All of those years spent hunting terrorists has finally come back to haunt Ding and co. Now they're the prey — and that's never a good thing.



It's like Metroid, only with terrorists. And a modern setting. And lots of guns. And a port-a-potty.

**RAINBOW SIX LOCKDOWN**

**PUBLISHED BY**
Ubisoft

**MADE BY**
Ubisoft Montreal

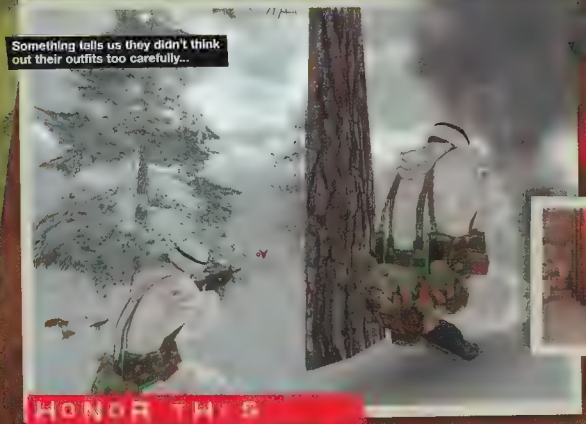
**WHAT IS THIS?**
The sequel to the hit tactical shooter *RS3*

**IT COMES OUT**
March

**ESRB**
Pending

**MULTIPLAYER**
1-16 players, 4-player co-op

**ONLINE**
Yes



Something tells us they didn't think out their outfits too carefully...

We guess all that "army of one" stuff is out the door. Get it? Do you really?

HONOR THIS

# America's Army

## Be all that you can be... literally!

If you want something done right, sometimes you have to do it yourself. That's why the U.S. Army (really!) is co-developing its hit PC title for the PS2. Unlike the PC version, however, the game features a much more in-depth single player career, as well as multiplayer. Seeing as how the PC version is free, we better see some heavy additions to the game if we're expected to pay for it.

What really makes *America's Army* a standout title is the fact that the U.S. Army has direct input into every facet of the game. This equates to an Army experience that's second only to the real thing. As long as we don't have to eat tasteless rations on a daily basis, we're sold. Ten-hut!

**AMERICA'S ARMY**

**PUBLISHED BY**
Ubisoft

**MADE BY**
Secret Level

**WHAT IS THIS?**
An Army shooter where you work up through the ranks

**IT COMES OUT**
June-August

**ESRB**
Pending

**MULTIPLAYER**
1-16 players

**ONLINE**
Yes

DOGG STYLE

# Medal of Honor: Dogs of War

## World War II isn't over just yet

**MEDAL OF HONOR: DOGS OF WAR**

**PUBLISHED BY**
EA

**MADE BY**
EA LA

**WHAT IS THIS?**
A WWII shooter very much like previous *MOH* games

**IT COMES OUT**
2005

**ESRB**
Pending

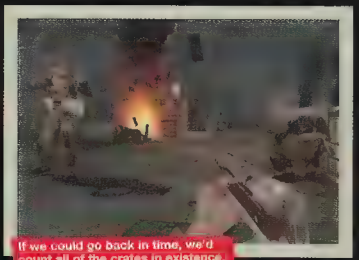
**MULTIPLAYER**
Yes

**ONLINE**
TBA

Is buying the exclusive rights to WWII next on EA's list? Nah... right?

You can't talk about military games without mentioning *Medal of Honor: Dogs of War*, the latest in the long-running series, takes place yet again against a WWII backdrop, but this time you play as a homesick German Shepard. Okay, we lied. But we mean it when we say that the game will have you playing a multitude of roles, from an eagle-eyed sniper to a lonely member of an infantry squad.

The ability to issue squad commands has also made the cut, but possibly the most significant addition to the game is the Rally Meter. Fill it up and earn the ability to wreak havoc on the enemy, super-move style. Having such a videogamey feature in the game may not be entirely realistic, but hey, in war we all need a little help.



If we could go back in time, we'd count all of the crates in existence.

# Splinter Cell Chaos Theory

## Stealth action re-redefined

**SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY**

**PUBLISHED BY**
Ubisoft

**MADE BY**
Ubisoft Montreal

**WHAT IS THIS?**
Third person stealth with innovative multiplayer

**IT COMES OUT**
March

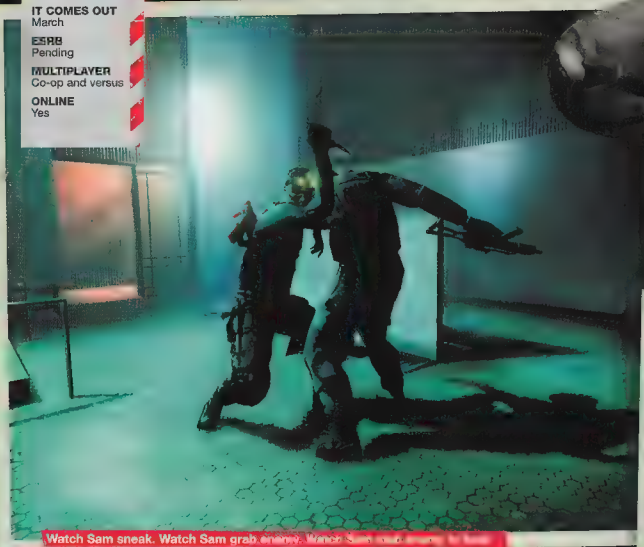
**ESRB**
Pending

**MULTIPLAYER**
Co-op and versus

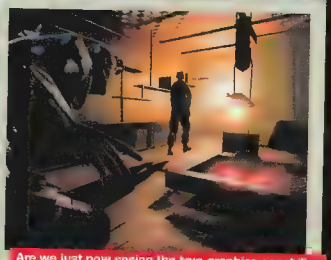
**ONLINE**
Yes

Hot off the heels of last year's stellar *Pandora Tomorrow* is *Splinter Cell Chaos Theory.* Improvements this time 'round include a number of new context-sensitive moves, a sound meter, and an extremely promising online co-op mode. Of course, the multiplayer-defining versus mode from the previous game will return, expectedly with new maps, weapons, and moves.

Splinter Cell's signature characteristic has always been the incredible graphics, and if these PS2 screenshots don't drive the point home, let us help you: the game looks friggin' unbelievable! Whether you're in the *Metal Gear* or *Splinter Cell* stealth camps, *Chaos Theory* should be on your radar.



Watch Sam sneak. Watch Sam grab enemy. Watch Sam [illegible]



Are we just now seeing the true graphics capabili[illegible]

## THE REST OF THE PACK

Believe it or not, there's more than what you've just seen. Here are several other titles that you should be keeping eye out for, whether you're into sky-high dog fighting or playing a virtua game of *Battleship.*

### Battlefield: Modern Combat
**Why you should care:** Large-scale vehicular and on-foot combat is never a bad thing.
**Made by:** Digital Illusions
**Published by:** EA
**Comes out:** October–December

### Commandos Strike Force
**Why you should care:** The popular PC franchise comes to PS2 as a first-person shooter, and it's looking quite fine.
**Made by:** Pyro Studios
**Published by:** Eidos
**Comes out:** Around Mayish

### Brothers in Arms
**Why you should care:** This may be the most authentic WWII game we've ever played. Seriously.
**Made by:** Gearbox
**Published by:** Ubisoft
**Comes out:** February

### Heroes of the Pacific
**Why you should care:** Flight combat games are hard to find, so that alone makes this one worth checking out.
**Made by:** thatgame
**Published by:** Encore
**Comes out:** April–June

### Battlestations: Midway
**Why you should care:** There's quite a bit of depth to this ship combat game. And it's pretty.
**Made by:** Mithis
**Published by:** SCi
**Comes out:** June–Aug

# Tekken's Nina Williams is even deadlier undercover.

As a covert operative of the CIA, Nina Williams enters an underground fighting tournament to track Kometa, a shadowy underworld organization. Functioning as the "sweeper" of her cell, Nina finds herself tracking a stolen high-tech weapon through a variety of locations to reveal a conspiracy on a global scale. Nina must now face a multitude of deadly enemies, as well as her own past, in order to save the world.

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MATURE 17+
Blood
Intense Violence
Language
Suggestive Themes
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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# The Square Revolution

## Sometimes being square ain't all that bad!

2004 was a relatively quiet year for RPG giant Square Enix, with its most notable PS2 title being the niche *Final Fantasy XI*. 2005 is a completely different story, with the company releasing a hefty number of high-profile titles. Here are four of the big guns likely to turn to you into an introverted insomniac. **KAISER HWANG**

FAR FROM FINAL

# Final Fantasy XII

## Twelve games in and still feeling the magic

**FINAL FANTASY XII**

**PUBLISHED BY**
Square-Enix

**MADE BY**
Square-Enix

**WHAT IS THIS?**
An epic RPG with gorgeous graphics and the *FF* polish.

**ESRB RATING**
Pending

**IT COMES OUT**
April

**MULTIPLAYER**
Nope

**ONLINE**
No

Yes, that's a twelve. Like clockwork, a new *Final Fantasy* game is just over the horizon, but this time you can expect some pretty radical changes to the gameplay — if you didn't play *FFXI*, that is.

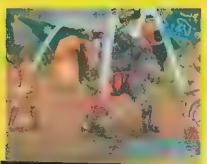
Rather than the traditional random turn-based battles you've grown used to, *FFXII* lets you avoid confrontations while also letting you switch members at any point in battle. The characters not in your immediate control are controlled by AI, though you can set Gambits (scripts) to order your team to defend, mirror your attacks, etc. The whole thing plays out much like *FFXI*, only with bots.

Gorgeous visuals (duh) and an epic score present the somewhat standard good vs. evil story, though you can expect some chilling twists in the plot. Hell, just knowing that the game takes place in Ivalice, the world from *FF Tactics*, is enough to have us wildly speculating about what will be revealed in the game. The fact that the game's director also made *Vagrant Story* only makes the wait that much harder.

Airships, a *Final Fantasy* staple, play a prominent role in *FFXII*.

No more random battles; if you see an enemy, you can choose to fight or flee. This only has a small impact on your manliness.

His hair might not be spikey, but rest assured that this is in fact a Square game.



Something about this new huka just isn't right...

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

# Kingdom Hearts II

## An unlikely collaboration, a very likely sequel

**KINGDOM HEARTS II**

**PUBLISHED BY**
Square-Enix

**MADE BY**
Square-Enix

**WHAT IS THIS?**
Disney and Square characters unite in an action RPG.

**ESRB RATING**
Pending

**IT COMES OUT**
September

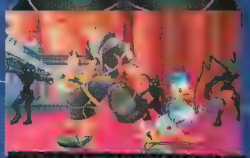
**MULTIPLAYER**
Nope

**ONLINE**
No

Slightly more boggling than a Legos and *Star Wars* crossover was when Disney and Square Enix united forces and released one of the most original and fascinating RPGs in recent history: *Kingdom Hearts*.

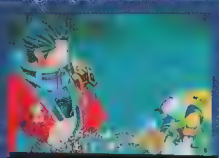
The direct sequel to the first game, *Kingdom Hearts II* sets out to answer many of the questions asked from the original title, while simultaneously adding onto and improving the gameplay. A newly improved camera system is in place, as well as the ability for main character Sora to fuse with other members in his party to create a temporary, more powerful character.

We don't know much else about the game, but as you can see from the screens here, it's looking just as good as the original, if not better. Let's just hope there's enough new content and gameplay to make it worth our while.



A boy, a duck, and a goofy dog walk into a bar...

Now which one did I take home from the bar last night?



I'm not sure what I walked in on, but I don't really want to know.

We all love bright shiny lights, but star-shaped ones are truly hot.

OH SO PRETTY

# Dragon Warrior VIII

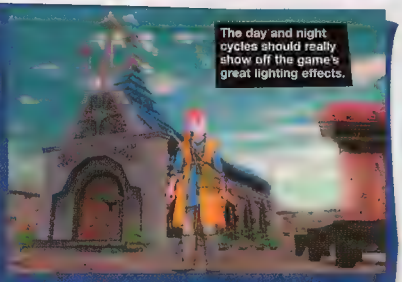
## Just the eight of us

**DRAGON WARRIOR VIII**
**PUBLISHED BY** Square Enix
**MADE BY** Square Enix
**WHAT IS THIS?** A deep RPG set in a GTA-like world.
**ESRB RATING** Pending
**IT COMES OUT** TBA
**MULTIPLAYER** No
**ONLINE** Nope

Known as *Dragon Quest* to overseas fans, this series has always been insanely popular in Japan. Even the SNES games caused Japanese gamers to line up for blocks on their way to work to pick up a copy of the game. The Japanese release of *Dragon Quest VIII* caused a similar riot in November, making it one of the fastest and best-selling games ever.

While an official US release date is unknown, you can bet that this game will make it over here sometime in 2005. What makes this *Dragon Warrior* so special is the open world. Imagine *GTA* set in a fantasy world, with some of the most incredible cel-shaded graphics you've ever seen.

As before, character designs are handled by *Dragonball* creator Akira Toriyama, making the cartoony look absolutely perfect for the game. Day and night cycles, the ability to combine items, and catching monsters for your own use add some fresh new angles to the gameplay, though the lack of any voices in the game has us completely stumped.



The day and night cycles should really show off the game's great lighting effects.

The Toriyama character designs look magnificent with the excellent cel-shading.

Unfortunately, reading a *Final Fantasy* strategy guide won't help you in this game.

LUCKY SEVEN

# Dirge Of Cerberus: Final Fantasy VII

## Vincent may cry, but we're all smiles

Earlier last year, Square Enix announced *Dirge of Cerberus*, an offshoot title from *Final Fantasy VII* featuring Vincent Valentine, the vampire stud muffin from said game. But as somewhat of a shock to most gamers, *Dirge* was casually revealed *not* to be an RPG.

So if it's not an RPG, then what is it? Well, even now not much is known about the game, but early gameplay video shows that it's obviously an action game; more specifically a shooter. Makes sense seeing as how Vincent was always the gun-slinger in the group.

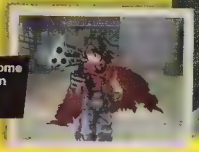
Story specifics are largely unknown, except that an underground group known as the "Deep Ground Soldiers" are up to no good and it's your job to stop them. All of this takes place three years after the events in *FFVII*. Pretty vague, we know, but sleep comfortably knowing that the game should have the typical Square polish found in almost all of its games.

**DIRGE OF CERBERUS: FINAL FANTASY VII**
**PUBLISHED BY** Square Enix
**MADE BY** Square Enix
**WHAT IS THIS?** An action game set in the *Final Fantasy* world.
**ESRB RATING** Pending
**IT COMES OUT** Sept-Dec.
**MULTIPLAYER** TBA
**ONLINE** TBA

Nice try, guys, but those *Tron* costumes suck ass.

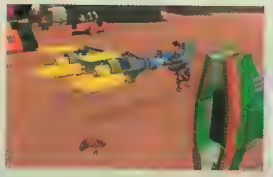
Along with the gunslingin', expect some stealthier moments to come into play.

What is it with Square and this whole 90210 spiked hair fad?



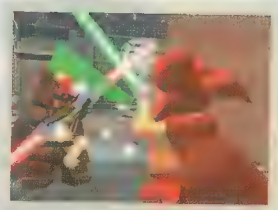
How come this gun isn't in *GTA?*

For once, blocky graphics are something that we actually like.



Can you believe that lil' Annie built this ship himself? Without using the force, even!

It's a fact: Legos do much better David Blaine impressions than PSM's Randy Nelson.



It's kinda like being at a wet and wild Lego rave, if you know what we mean.

**LEGO STAR WARS**

**PUBLISHED BY**
Eidos

**MADE BY**
Traveler's Tale

**WHAT IS THIS?**
A third-person action game that's really really cute.

**ESRB RATING**
Everyone

**IT COMES OUT**
May

**MULTIPLAYER**
2-player co-op

**ONLINE**
Nope

LEGOLICIOUS

# Lego Star Wars

## The Force has never been so cuddly

Before you say anything, let us say our piece. Yes, *Lego Star Wars* is a "kids" title. Yes, the gameplay is relatively simple and arcade-like. Yes, it features the cast and worlds from the *Star Wars* universe only constructed out of, um, Legos. But damn it, there's something so undeniably charming and fun about it that you just can't help but crack a smile.

Using the first three episodes as a backdrop, you begin the game living out the events in *The Phantom Menace*, then *Attack of the Clones*, and inevitably rounding out your epic journey with the *Revenge of the Sith*. But rather than assuming the role of one character throughout the course of the game, you'll assume roughly thirty different roles.

That's right, just about every character you see in the game can not only be played, but you can switch between them on the fly at any point in the game. This schizophrenic element of the game allows you to solve puzzles and explore different areas of the game, as each character has a unique ability; R2D2 can hack computer systems, while Amidala has a grappling hook she can use to get to otherwise unreachable locations.

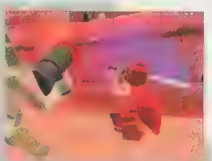
But this is just as much a Legos game as it is a *Star Wars* game, and it shows. Structures break apart into those little pimpled bricks we all know and love, and the characters feature simple, but highly expressive facial features. Accordingly, there are no actual voices during the cutscenes – only facial expressions and body language are used to convey the story. And quite well, we might add.

With two-player co-op available at all times, Pod racing and flying sequences, and sound effects straight out of Skywalker Ranch, the only thing not in the game is the ability to use Legos to build your own gigantic spaceship. Oh wait, you *can* do that in the game.

*Lego Star Wars* may not change the face of gaming, but we'd be lying if we said it didn't make us feel all warm and cuddly inside. And that's more than we can say for the last two movies.

**KAISER HWANG**

Even Lego heroes can get a bad case of dandruff...



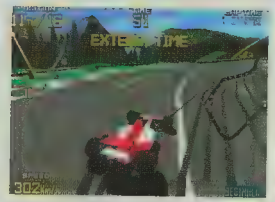
Barry Bonds makes a cameo appearance. It's outa here!

Man, they really gotta lay off the starch at Force Dry Cleaners.

### Build it and They Will Come

Think these ships are cool? Well, you can actually buy them at your local store!

Believe it or not, every character, vehicle and structure in *Lego Star Wars* is actually a real-life *Lego Star Wars* toy you can buy. So after you get your rocks off playing the game, go buy the real models and recreate all of the scenarios for the hell of it. Nerd.



*Virtua Racing* was actually the first mainstream game to use polygons.

*Space Harrier* is probably too simple for today's gamers, but back then, *wow*.

*Outrun* was such a great game in its day — it and *Hang-On* made for a lethal one-two Sega racing punch at the arcade.

SAVE YOUR QUARTERS

# Sega Classics Collection

## We love the '90s!

**SEGA CLASSICS COLLECTION**

**PUBLISHED BY**
Sega

**MADE BY**
Sega

**WHAT IS THIS?**
An epic RPG with gorgeous graphics and the *FF* polish.

**ESRB RATING**
Pending

**IT COMES OUT**
February

**MULTIPLAYER**
Depends on the game

**ONLINE**
No

Welcome back to PSM's *I Love the 90's*. On today's feature, we're looking at a disc for your PS2 to highlight the heyday of the Sega Genesis System — *Sega Classics Collection*. Where are you now, Sega? *WHERE ARE YOU NOW?*

■ *Outrun*: a fast car and a hot blonde riding shotgun made this the premiere racing coin-muncher in arcades for years. If you're a fan of Brooke Burke in *Need for Speed*, you owe a debt of thanks to the nameless — and faceless — blonde in the passenger seat.

■ Years before Frodo and Gandalf made hundreds of millions and swept the Oscars, *Golden Axe* told the tale of Death-Adder, a misunderstood dictator who simply wanted to maim and slaughter in peace. Players controlled a dwarf, a fighter or a valkyrie, and lead a rebellion.

■ It's not from the '60s, but *Fantasy Zone* is still pretty far out. Trippy colors, a carefree hero and gameplay mechanics borrowed from *Defender* make this a game to remember, dude.

■ Physical fitness isn't what it was back in the '90s, and this title proves it. The lead character in *Space Harrier* straps on a huge gun and then spends the entire game running. Literally.

■ Sure, the graphics in *Virtua Racer* are terrible, but they were revolutionary back then. But no one plays a game just for the graphics, anymore, right? You know, like *Leisure Suit Larry*.

■ *Columns* is a *Tetris* clone where you drop gems into — you guessed it — columns. We're not sure which is more original: the gameplay or the name.

■ The Genesis couldn't render Sigourney Weaver well — and then there was the potential of a lawsuit with James Cameron — but *Alien Syndrome* and its xenophobe-slagging fun was still a hit.

■ Long before Rockstar opened fire on our wallets with *Grand Theft Auto, Ichini no Tant R to Bonanza Bros.* (one of the oddest names ever) had players rob banks, steal treasure and evade the law. **DOUG TRUEMAN**

*Golden Axe* was all the rage at the arcades. Two-player *Double Dragon*-type action with hot barbarian babes in bikinis? What's not to like?

While not a huge hit here in the U.S., *Fantasy Zone* was a kickin' side-scrolling space shooter. It's pastel, acid trip visuals and hard-as-heck bosses ruled.

KOEI
www.koei.com

PlayStation.2

March 2005

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Produced by Omega Force

DOLBY DIGITAL PRO LOGIC II

RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

# Destroy All Humans!

The garden variety B-movie alien invasion plot gets turned on its head in *Destroy All Humans!* as players take on the role of Cryptosporidium-137, an alien with an attitude, psychic powers, and a whole world of foolish humans to play with. Along with the standard Earth-based weapons and vehicles at your disposal — all appropriate for the 1950's time period — you can also use Crypto's arsenal of ray guns and flying saucers. No word on any anal probing, but we can certainly survive without it.

**PUBLISHED BY** THQ + **MADE BY** Pandemic + **IT COMES OUT** April

Use your mental powers to control weak-minded humans. Resistance is useless!

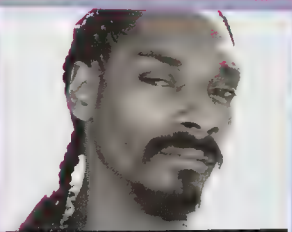
Keeping your yard neat and clean is easy with the new Laser Mower 5000! Assembly required.

With just two attendees, Carl's rave was the smallest the city had ever seen.

## The Shield

Sure, Vic Mackey's a cop, but he's more than willing to break a few laws to get the job done. Hey, that's what it takes to get the bad guys — and make a profit in the process. You *could* play it straight if you want, but where's the fun in that? At least you'll have the choice to choose between the Dark or the Ligh... er, we mean play good cop/bad cop (or theoretically "in the middle" cop). Expect to rough up and/or shoot a lot of suspects, like on the show. Yippie-kai-yay.

**PUBLISHED BY** Sammy + **MADE BY** Point Of View + **IT COMES OUT** March



Damn! My shizzle is bein' in more games than that weak Mario dude! Touching is dizzope!

## Fear & Respect

John Singleton, the director who showed us gang life in *Boyz N the Hood*, now has us *experiencing* gang life — virtually, of course — in the upcoming *Fear & Respect*. Featuring a to-be-named protagonist who finds himself pulled back into gang life after a stint in prison, the game is expected to have shooting and melee combat elements, and will feature a *San Andreas*-style respect system. Oh, and soon-to-be gaming cameo god, Snoop Dogg, is featured as a main character. Gin and juice sold separately.

**PUBLISHED BY** Midway + **MADE BY** Midway **IT COMES OUT** Winter 2005

It was kind of tricky, but Anya finally managed to stick a TV onto her Buddha statue.

## Stolen

To catch a thief, you must think like a thief — unless you *are* the thief and don't want to be caught, as is the case in *Stolen*. Players take on the role of the sexy and stealthy Anya Romanov as she uses her flashy moves and futuristic gadgets to obtain all sorts of goodies in Forge City — only to find herself caught in a grave conspiracy. Think *Splinter Cell*, *Prince of Persia*, and *Metal Gear* all mashed together.

**PUBLISHED BY** Hip Interactive + **MADE BY** Blue-52 + **IT COMES OUT** March

antigrav

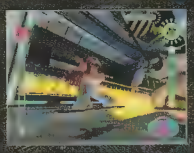
EyeToy: AntiGrav™ Includes

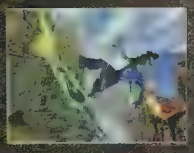
EyeToy™ USB Camera (for PlayStation®2)

EyeToy: AntiGrav™ Game Disc

## PUT DOWN THE CONTROLLER AND BECOME ONE WITH THE GAME

Your body is the controller as you become one of eight hoverboarders in EyeToy™ AntiGrav.™ Blitz, grind and trick-combo your way through five futuristic worlds in the only EyeToy™ game where your actions control the on-screen 3-D character. Jump on board today at www.eyetoy-antigrav.com





EVERYONE

E

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PlayStation.2

www.us.playstation.com

EYE TOY

FULL BODY CONTROL

LIVE IN YOUR WORLD
PLAY IN OURS

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# Resident Evil Outbreak File #2

Once again, you are thrown into a zombie-ridden online world from which there is little chance of escape. Cooperating with others, however, will drastically improve your chances. Too bad there's still no voice chat; you'll just have to use the preset responses. (Or you might want to try sign language — it can't hurt.) There are even more zombies this time around and, better yet, zombified animals — like a zombie elephant! — trying to consume your tasty flesh. You know, if you'd just stop coating your skin with butter, you could avoid this sort of thing... maybe...

Larry's rave was way better than Carl's. Heck, *three* people showed up!

It was the worst case of head lice the Public Health Department had ever seen...

**PUBLISHED BY** Capcom + **MADE BY** Capcom + **IT COMES OUT** April

Well, it's not like the Prince of Persia's going to be using his court anytime soon. He's way too *cool* for tennis. But not heavy metal.

## Outlaw Tennis

Imagine a world where tennis matches are played solely by players like Anna Kournikova and John McEnroe — cranked up to 11. This is the world of *Outlaw Tennis*, where sex and violence spice up yet another sport usually lacking those two important features. With 16 different characters, 12 courts, and the *Outlaw* series' signature fighting/composure system, there's plenty of fun and sexual innuendo to be had.

**PUBLISHED BY** Global Star + **MADE BY** Hypnotix + **IT COMES OUT** April

When Kurenai forgets her wire, she has to rely on her skimpy outfit to defeat her foes. Hot!

## Red Ninja: End Of Honor

You think *your* life sucks? This tale of tragedy begins when a girl named Kurenai and her father are viciously attacked by the villainous Black Lizard Clan. They hang her by a wire and leave her to die, but against all odds, she survives — and she's pissed. Use Kurenai's wire in conjunction with the environment to get revenge on your assailants as brutally as possible. Or not.

**PUBLISHED BY** Vivendi + **MADE BY** Tranji + **IT COMES OUT** March

There weren't many people at Bruce's rave either, but they all wore cool costumes.

## Marvel Versus EA

It sounds odd, but it's a reality: Marvel superheroes and EA characters are going head-to-head in a fighting game. Instead of using established EA characters, it seems that new characters will be created specifically for this title and will be used in future EA and Marvel products — so don't get any ideas of Captain America fighting John Madden, no matter how cool it might sound.

**PUBLISHED BY** EA + **MADE BY** EA Canada + **IT COMES OUT** TBA

"BEFORE NORMANDY
WE WERE JUST SOLDIERS."

"BUT EIGHT DAYS IN HELL
MADE US BROTHERS."
- SGT. MATT BAKER
COMING SOON TO PC AND CONSOLES
RP
Visit www.esrb.org
for updated rating
information.
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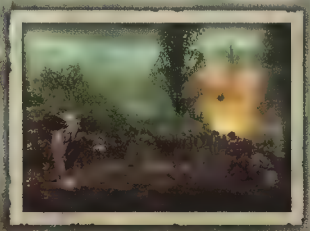
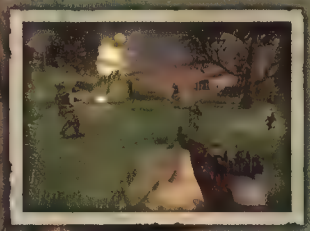
BASED ON A TRUE STORY.

Follow the true 7 days and 16 missions in a realistic story about a brotherhood of soldiers.



No science fiction, no blood, guts and action like no other game.



First game to allow players to lead AI squads into battle in split-screen or online multiplayer.

# BROTHERS IN ARMS

## ROAD TO HILL 30

gearbox software

UBISOFT

## 2004's BEST GAMES

# THE PSM 10

**PS2'S BEST YEAR. PS2'S BEST GAMES. PSM HAS THE DEFINITIVE LIST!**

It's like the Oscars, Grammies, and Emmys all rolled into one — except we don't have fancy statues, musical acts, or tearful acceptance speeches by sitcom stars. You know what? That's a good thing, because what we do have are 10 of the best games you've ever played, all of which were released in the same year. In fact, 2004 was easily PS2's best year yet... which not only made ranking the top 10 tougher than ever, but also had us grimacing over the fact that we could only choose 10 in the first place; there were simply that many awesome games to choose from.

The process behind coming up with this best-of-the-best lineup wasn't easy... or pretty. We usually get along really well, but only a few things, such as the second coming of disco, are scarier than a member of the PSM staff hell-bent on their favorite game making it into the top 10.

Hey, we take our games seriously. That's why you won't find a game on the list just because it has cool graphics; all of them are textbook examples of everything great games should be.

Of course, this is PSM's list — you may or may not agree with all of our choices, but we stand behind them and all the thought (and arguing) that went into deciding on them. That said: Let the countdown begin!

# 10

## KILLZONE

**Developer:** Guerilla
**Publisher:** Sony Computer Entertainment America

**PSM SAYS:** The whole idea behind the first-person shooter is breaking down that final barrier between moving someone around the screen and feeling like you are the character you're playing as — that you're in the game. *Killzone*, with its sheer A/V onslaught and attention to realism, had us convinced we were fighting in a real (near) future war. Factor in great pacing, remarkable firefights, and one of the best online experiences on PS2, and the result is nothing short of FPS excellence. **—RANDY NELSON**

**FROM THE CREATORS:** "A big thank you from the bottom of our hearts to you and your readers! We've been really impressed by the response *Killzone* has received from both hardcore FPS fans and gamers in general — which makes it all worthwhile. See you all online, where we can thank you properly... *Killzone* style, with rockets!"
**—GUERILLA GAMES, KILLZONE DEVELOPMENT TEAM**

# 9

## KATAMARI DAMACY

**Developer:** Namco
**Publisher:** Namco

**PSM SAYS:** What is it that makes this quirky little game so incredible? Is it the arcade-simple, oh-so-addictive basic game concept? Is it the oddball sense of humor and style, with simple, psychedelic visuals and an unforgettably goofy King of the Cosmos? Is it the game's *Mario*-like innocence, vibrancy, and purity, or the strange sense of scale, in which you start off picking up tiny cherries and end up collecting skyscrapers? Is it just that we haven't seen a game this fresh for years? The answer, of course, is that it's *all* of these things.
**—ERIC BRATCHER**

**FROM THE CREATOR:** "Amazing! Terrific! Super-fab! Thank you so much! We are super-thrilled that U.S. gamers also like rolling a katamari! We are glad that you believed in us!

We have been to America twice. It is awesome that America is so cool, with so many great things to roll up! We're zipping back to Space now. Thanks again! Royal Rainbow!"
**—KEITA TAKAHASI, GAME DIRECTOR**

# 8

## JAK 3

**Developer:** Naughty Dog, Inc.
**Publisher:** Sony Computer Entertainment America

**PSM SAYS:** *Jak 3*, most likely the last in the series for PS2 and the last chapter developed by Naughty Dog, does an amazing job of tying up the trilogy. Characters, locations and plot points from the previous games reappear to bring the series full circle, building towards a thrill-a-minute finish with shocks and surprises at every turn. One hilarious revelation even made me shoot soda out of my nose, and for that alone, we salute this game.
**—CHRIS SLATE**

**FROM THE CREATORS:** "It's an honor to be chosen as one of PSM's top 10 games of 2004, especially considering the unprecedented number of triple-A titles released this year. The whole team at Naughty Dog worked extremely hard on *Jak 3* and it's gratifying to have the effort recognized."
**—EVAN WELLS, CREATIVE DIRECTOR**

"Everyone here at Naughty Dog is proud of what we achieved in *Jak 3*, and we consider it a real privilege for our game to be recognized alongside so many excellent titles. Thanks to our friends at PSM for your support and enthusiasm."
**—AMY HENNIG, GAME DIRECTOR**

*Jak II* was our game of the year for 2003, and while its sequel didn't repeat in the top spot, it's still great!
DAXTER, THAT *CREEPY GUY* IS LOOKING FOR *YOU*.
WHAT'D YOU DO *THIS* TIME?
OH CRAP -- THOSE WERE *HIS* COOKIES?!

# 7

## SHADOW HEARTS: COVENANT

**Developer:** Aruze / Nautilus
**Publisher:** Midway

**PSM SAYS:** In a holiday season with no single-player *Final Fantasy* RPG, this awesome Gothic epic filled the void with stunning ease. In fact, the comparison almost sells *Shadow Hearts: Covenant* short; the game not only bottles a ton of that *FF* magic, but it also has a very unique identity of its own.

*SH: Covenant's* greatest quality is its story, which is both hilarious and was apparently localized by people who actually gave a damn about how the final product would read in English. It's wonderful. **—ERIC BRATCHER**

**FROM THE CREATORS:** "Thank you very much for presenting us with this wonderful award. Our entire staff put much effort, hard work, and enthusiasm into this game, and we are so excited and happy to know that many people enjoyed the game as much as we enjoyed creating it."
**—MATSUZO MACHIDA, GAME DIRECTOR**

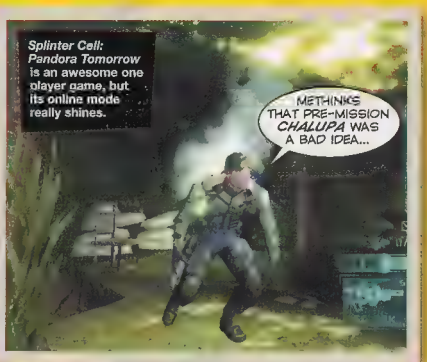
# 6

## SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

**Developer:** Ubisoft Shanghai
**Publisher:** Ubisoft

**PSM SAYS:** *Pandora Tomorrow* serves up some of the most intriguing single-player missions seen in any game, but the game's multiplayer is what pushes this game from the realm of excellent into the stratosphere of classic status. The perfect balancing of opposing abilities, the first-person versus third-person viewpoints, and -- once again — the breakthrough graphics make playing multiplayer a truly timeless joy. Ten years from now when people are still recognizing the brilliance of this mode, you can say "I told you so." You're welcome.
**—KAISER HWANG**

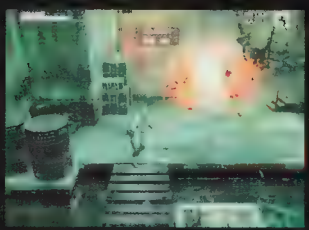
**FROM THE CREATORS:** "It's extremely gratifying to receive this award. The *Splinter Cell* franchise has always had the reputation for innovation with graphics, design and gameplay. *Pandora Tomorrow* upped that with the spies vs. mercenaries multiplayer mode — it became a real hit with online gamers! We're always striving for that next level, and Ubisoft will definitely deliver again with *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory*."
**—GUNTHER GALIPOT, CREATIVE DIRECTOR**


Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow is an awesome one player game, but its online mode really shines.
METHINKS THAT PRE-MISSION CHALUPA WAS A BAD IDEA...

# SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

### BEST GRAPHICS
METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

### BEST SOUND EFFECTS
METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER



### BEST MUSIC
METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

# 5

Across the board, *Warrior Within* improves on *Sands of Time* — especially in its amazing art design.

## PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN

**Developer:** Ubisoft Montreal
**Publisher:** Ubisoft

**PSM SAYS:** *Warrior Within* takes the best elements from the platforming, action, and adventure genres, and smashes them into a cohesive experience you're not likely to forget. It's no secret that the game has taken on a more — buzzword radar, on! — "mature" and "edgy" aesthetic, but love it or not, it doesn't detract from the core gaming experience — and that's what counts.

From a simple gameplay standpoint, *Warrior Within* can pull ranks with the best of them. It's just our luck that the story and story *telling* in the game are equally as satisfying. As the plot threads slowly weave together and you begin to get a glimpse of the big picture, you can't help but get that same giddy feeling you got the first time you played the original *Prince*. If that's not reason enough to make our top ten list, we don't know what is. **—KAISER HWANG**

**FROM THE CREATORS:** "We are psyched to get such an award because it is recognition from the very people we make games for. *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within* is giving even more players all the uniqueness that the series has to offer. We are thrilled to know that more and more gamers are enjoying the saga." **—YANNIS MALLAT, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

# 4

## BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

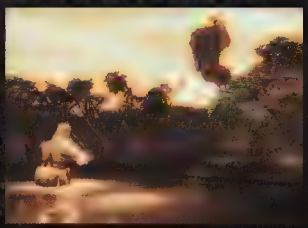
**Developer:** Criterion Software Ltd.
**Publisher:** Electronic Arts

**PSM SAYS:** *Burnout 3: Takedown* is the finest arcade racing game ever made. It's high praise, indeed, but fitting when you consider that *Burnout 3* redefines the racing genre. No longer is racing limited to the rush of outmaneuvering your rivals to take first place — now that's replaced with the visceral thrill of shunting them into a concrete pillar at insane speeds. And you can't forget about the even more addictive Crash Mode. As if this weren't enough, you can do all of this online. Indeed, all of this proves that *Burnout 3* is truly the best arcade racer to ever grace the PS2. **—JUSTIN CHENG**

**FROM THE CREATORS:** "It's a great honor for *Burnout 3: Takedown* to be recognized by PSM as one of the top 10 games of 2004. We're thrilled to see that gamers are experiencing just how unique and exciting *Burnout 3's* gameplay can be! This would not have been possible without the support of such a talented development team. We all thank you." **—ALEX WARD, CREATIVE DIRECTOR, CRITERION GAMES**

When it came to picking our Most Improved Sequel winner, *Burnout 3* came in a very close second.

**BEST ART DESIGN**
METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER



**BEST CHARACTERS**
METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

**BEST STORY**
METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

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Strong Language

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# 3

No one's saying if this is the last *Ratchet & Clank* game ever, but it's definitely the best in the series.

## RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO

**Developer:** Insomniac Games
**Publisher:** Sony Computer Entertainment America

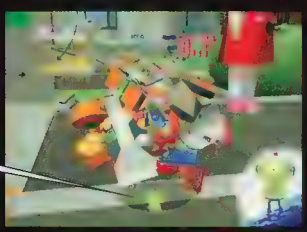
**PSM SAYS:** *Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal* takes everything you loved about the first two games and kicks it up several notches: more weapons to play with, more humor, more gameplay variety, and even more Captain Qwark. It would be enough for Insomniac to call it a day with just these improvements, and it would still be a great game — fortunately for us, however, they didn't. Instead, they coupled this excellent single player adventure with some fantastically addictive online play, making *Ratchet & Clank 3* not only the best game in the series, but one of the best PS2 games, period.
**—JUSTIN CHENG**

**FROM THE CREATORS:** "On behalf of everyone at Insomniac Games, thank you very much for including *Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal* in PSM's top games this year! A whole lot of people worked very hard to make this the best of the series and it's very gratifying for us to see how much people have enjoyed playing the game. In particular we've all had a lot of fun going online and playing against Ratchet fans (and, in many cases, getting our butts kicked). We're also very grateful for the fantastic support we've had from Sony Computer Entertainment America and all of our online beta testers. Thanks again and see you on Planet Veldin!"
**—TED PRICE, PRESIDENT, INSOMNIAC GAMES**

### BEST CINEMATICS
**METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER**

### BEST REPLAY VALUE
**GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS**

### BEST ORIGINAL GAME
**KATAMARI DAMACY**



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# 2

## GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

**Developer:** Rockstar North
**Publisher:** Rockstar Games

**PSM SAYS:** Simply put, this is the pinnacle of the series that has best defined the PlayStation 2. Not naming *San Andreas* as our Game of the Year is one of the hardest things we've ever had to do — this isn't just the second best game of 2004, it's easily one of the top two games on PS2, period.

The series' pioneering "go anywhere, do anything" gameplay is pushed to an incredible new degree, showing an ambition level higher than most game makers would ever dare to dream. This is, very literally, a game that you could play every night for months and still not experience everything. And even if you do eventually win every challenge the game throws at you, *San Andreas* is a world that you'll often feel the urge to visit again, if only to screw around and drop by the old hood. You don't play *San Andreas* so much as you live there.

More so than any other game this year (yes, even *Halo 2*), *San Andreas* was *the* pop culture phenomenon that everyone had to play.

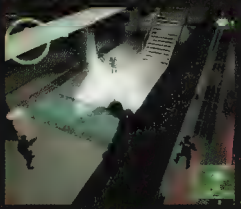
It's a remarkable achievement that, without a doubt, will stand as this generation's most ambitious videogame.
**—CHRIS SLATE**

**FROM THE CREATORS:** "Thanks so much to everyone who bought the game. We are really proud of it. We hope you enjoy it as much as we do."
**—EVERYONE AT ROCKSTAR GAMES**

Creating a massive city was one thing, but an entire state? Rockstar North's ambition never ceases to amaze!

**BEST VOICE ACTING**
GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

**BEST ONLINE GAME**
SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW



**MOST IMPROVED SEQUEL**
PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN

**BEST USE OF A LICENSE**
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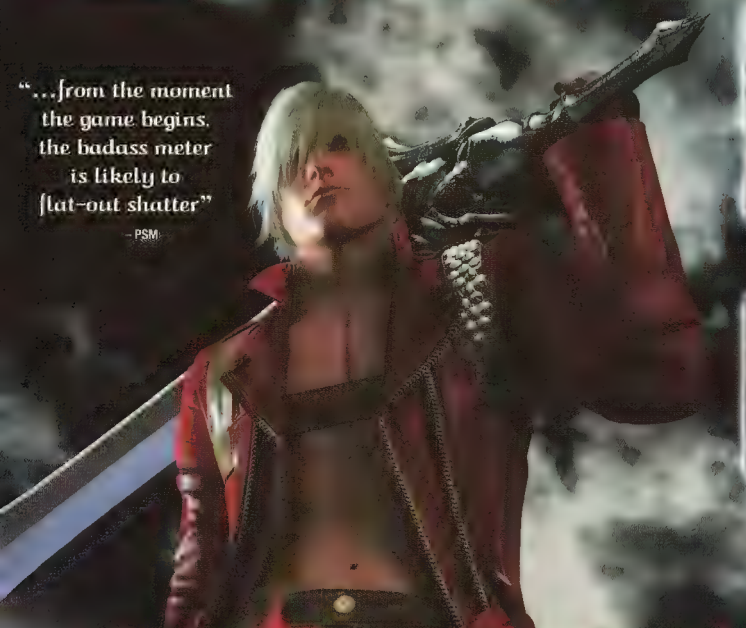
**GUNSLINGER STYLE**
Blow away enemies from all angles

"...from the moment the game begins, the badass meter is likely to flat-out shatter"
– PSM



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# 1

After seeing Snake in his ultra-cool survival gear, we don't know if we can go back to the sneaking suit.

## METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

**Developer:** Konami Computer Entertainment Japan
**Publisher:** Konami Digital Entertainment America

**PSM SAYS:** *San Andreas* had Game of the Year in the bag. Locked up. It was a done deal. And it deserves our highest accolades. But *damn* if we couldn't get *Snake Eater* out of our heads. A week of "Omigod, did you see *this* scene? Or *this* one?" by the office water cooler finally convinced us — we wouldn't be able to live with ourselves if we denied this game the top spot.

If *GTA* is the best example of what new ideas can offer modern gaming, then *MGS3* is the polished, perfected masterpiece of a more traditional style — it's classic games craftsmanship at its very best. *Snake Eater* had the year's best story, best characters, best boss fights, best graphics, and best soundtrack. You can *feel* the designers' love and dedication to their work in every corner of this game.

Few games have been so immersive, so thrilling, so suspenseful, so sad, so funny, or so deep. *Snake Eater* stands as a testament to the vision of its creators and cements, once and for all, Director Hideo Kojima as one of gaming's living legends. This is an epic end to *Metal Gear* on PS2, and a monumental finish to one of the best trilogies of all time. **—CHRIS SLATE**

**FROM THE CREATORS:** "This year was full of 'mega titles' like *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, *Halo 2*, and *Half-Life 2*, so *Metal Gear Solid 3* receiving this award is really an honor. At the same time, I think people like the idea that *MGS3* turned out to be very different from what they were expecting, and that was done intentionally. What I'm especially happy about is that all the other "mega titles" I mentioned are non-Japanese games developed in the West, and *MGS3* is the only Japanese game, so it receiving this honor makes me really happy." **—HIDEO KOJIMA, GAME DIRECTOR**

"This is the third game in the *Metal Gear Solid* series, and everyone on the team thinks it's the best of the three. We're very happy that it's received this award, and we'd be even happier if more people pick it up and try it out." **—YOJI SHINKAWA, CHARACTER, MECHANICAL, AND VISUAL DESIGNER**

## IF OUR LIST WENT TO 11...

2004 was full of amazing games — so many, in fact, that we all had ones that simply couldn't make the cut and still have a "top 10" list. Here's what each of us would have picked, if we could've added just one more game to this already awesome list!

**CHRIS: VIEWTIFUL JOE**
Don't let the fact that the sequel's out and the game originally came out last year for GameCube put you off of this amazing evolution of the old-school side-scrolling action game. Plus it's only 20 bucks! Viewtiful!

**RANDY: SLY 2: BAND OF THIEVES**
*Ratchet & Clank: UYA* and *Jak 3* deserve their spots in the top 10, but *Sly 2* is right up there with them in my book. It's better than the original in every way — just what a great sequel should be!

**ERIC: CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH**
This fantastic Action RPG reinvented its genre, delivering fantastic visuals, randomly generated dungeon layouts, and kick-ass online play with full voice chat. Respect!

**KAISER: STREET FIGHTER ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION**
This collection appeals to both my nostalgic heart and my light wallet. No more quarters and every notable *Street Fighter* title? Uh, this is off the hizzy.

**JUSTIN: ACE COMBAT 5**
It was tough to decide what my 11th game would be, but I would have to say *AC5*, simply because it delivers an unparalleled arcade flying experience.

SPOILERS! READ AT YOUR OWN RISK!

# Director's Commentary on Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater with Hideo Kojima

*Our #1 game of 2004 was filled with amazing moments and five simply classic ones. Kojima-san and lead artist Yoji Shinkawa take us behind these scenes.*

## SCENE: Snake Versus The End

**Hideo Kojima:** "In *MGS1*, we had Sniper Wolf because I wanted to have a sniper battle. The thing is with Sniper Wolf, she only appeared in a few spots as you fought her, so it was very "game" like. We also had a sniper segment in *MGS2*, but again, it was very limited. I'm personally a fan of Stephen Hunter's novels, where you have scenes in the mountains where two snipers are hiding and trying to find each other for days. That's something I wanted to do in *MGS3*. So, finally, I get these two characters in the mountains, hiding, with The End trying to ambush Snake.

When I explained what I wanted to do to my programmers, I made them read Hunter's books. We also went into the mountains and did some "real" training. My final direction to my guys was: "If there are 10 people that play this boss fight, I wouldn't mind if five of them hated it to the point of wanting to stop playing, as long as the other five fall in love with it."

When we came up with the first version of the battle with The End, members of the team played it for hours upon hours and couldn't find him. The whole team was booing me! Eventually, we had to tweak it so you'd run into him more often.

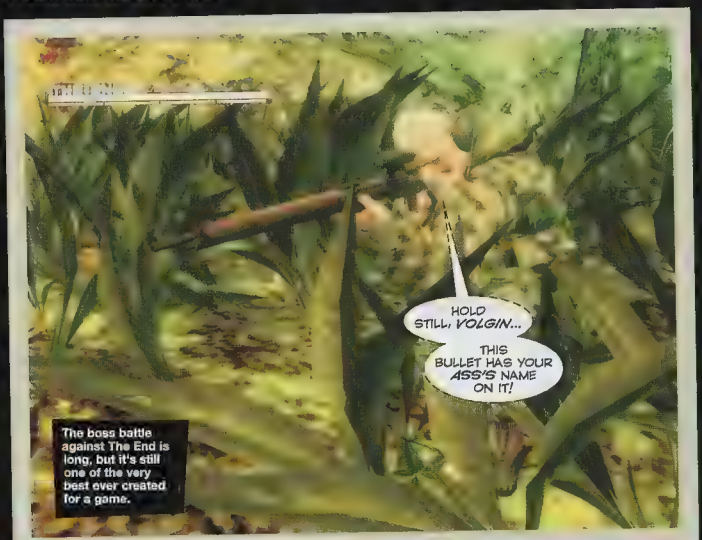
There's a point early in the game, way before you get to The End's boss battle, where you see him on the dock at the end of the mangrove river. It's not easy, but you can actually kill him there and never actually encounter him in the boss battle. The part of the team who worked specifically on The End battle put three or four months of effort into planning it, but it could conceivably not happen because you could actually kill him before you reach the boss fight. The team wasn't happy, but I personally felt that giving players this option gave them freedom; it was a service to them, even if the people who planned the boss battle didn't like it.

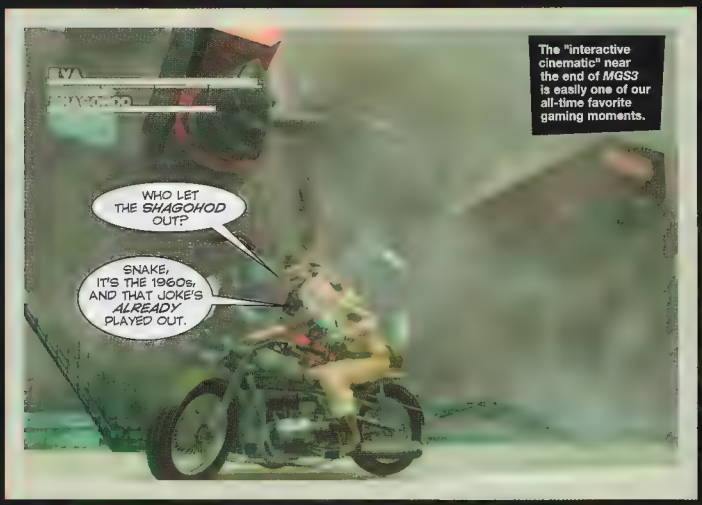
If you beat The End at the end of the mangrove river, you encounter the Ocelot unit in the area where you're technically supposed to fight him, so there is still a battle you have to face. I made sure that the guys who worked on The End battle and the guys who programmed the Ocelot unit were different teams, so basically there was a battle between the team behind The End and the team behind the Ocelot unit, but the ultimate choice of who to fight was left up to the player."

## SCENE: Volgin Tortures a Captive Snake

**Hideo Kojima:** "This scene originally started off much like it appears in the game, with a bag over Snake's head so the player can't see anything. However, we wanted to use 3D sound so you'd hear what Volgin was doing, but not see it, and the whole thing was going to go on much longer. Eventually, we ended up cutting that back.

We were also going to have an option as Snake was being tortured to have the player choose either "yes" or "no" when Volgin commanded him to "speak" or "break," but we ended up removing this feature because


HOLD STILL, VOLGIN...
THIS BULLET HAS YOUR ASS'S NAME ON IT!
The boss battle against The End is long, but it's still one of the very best ever created for a game.




The "interactive cinematic" near the end of *MGS3* is easily one of our all-time favorite gaming moments.

of things going on in the real world; we really had to tone things down in terms of violence.

As for the motion capturing for that scene, there's actually a special way the KGB would hang people up to interrogate them. The thing is, if you hang someone the KGB way, their shoulders would get dislocated after only a few minutes. We couldn't do that to our motion capture actor, so we hung him in a more "mild" way, but, even then, we had to lower him down every few minutes because it was still very painful.

The scene was also very heavy in story info given to the player, so it was an important point in the game overall."

## SCENE: Snake Versus The Sorrow

**Hideo Kojima:** "There's one thing in videogames I don't like: the whole idea of "game over." This is a feature you really don't need in console games. I guess it's a remnant of arcade games, where you needed to kick one person off to get the next person to put in their quarters.

Instead of having a "game over" in *MGS3*, what I wanted to do was have a scene where Snake would be walking down the River Styx, with a guy calling him, telling him to come to him. If Snake gave in and approached him, he'd die, but if he resisted and walked away, he'd come back to life.

This whole "going across the River Styx" thing, which I called the "Styx System," is what I eventually developed into the Sorrow battle.

Including The Boss, there are five Cobra Unit members in the game. But actually, when you press R1 in certain cinemas, Snake ends up seeing The Sorrow, who is the sixth member of the Cobra Unit... the sixth member, like a sixth sense. That's something I really wanted to include in *Snake Eater:* a character that only Snake, and not any of the other characters, was able to see."

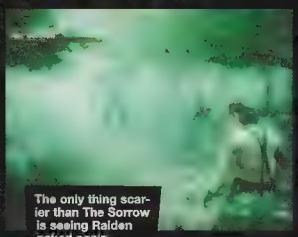
## SCENE: Shagohod Escapes / The Motorcycle Chase

**Hideo Kojima:** "First of all, my intention was for this scene to take place entirely in first-person view. That's what I was going for, but Mr. Shinkawa, our lead artist, didn't like that idea, so I said, 'Okay then, I'll just leave it up to you!'"

**Yoji Shinkawa:** "This was something we experimented with in *MGS1;* the idea of a playable cutscene, but it was never fully realized. I really wanted to include a truly playable cutscene in *MGS3,* and, as you saw, the whole Shagohod scene and motorcycle escape was essentially a playable cutscene.

Tweaking this playable cutscene was very difficult because of the two different camera angles. You had the original cinematic camera angle, and a first-person view in order to shoot. If we tweaked the scene in the more difficult direction, you would have had to depend on the first-person view more often in order to aim more accurately. If you didn't use first-person, it would be very difficult. If we made it too easy, where you never needed the first-person view button, it wouldn't have been as enjoyable. We wanted to make sure that the player could enjoy the scene from both camera angles: the first-person view and the cinematic, "Shinkawa" one.

This choice — being able to play this cutscene from two different angles — is just another example of the freedom the player is given throughout the entire game. My joy is seeing people taking advantage of the fact that they've been given these choices, instead of having to play it just one way."



The only thing scarier than The Sorrow is seeing Raiden naked again.

## SCENE: Snake Finally Fights The Boss

**Hideo Kojima:** "From the very beginning, when I first came up with the basic plot of the game, it said that Snake would face The Boss, kind of this "mother figure," in a field full of flowers. A flower blooms and then dies — it's the means of a plant's reproduction. There's symbolism there: You have the "mother" sort of passing the torch of life... an older generation giving way to a younger generation — that's The Boss facing Snake.

My original gameplay plan was to have the player simply hide in the flowers. Then Shinkawa said "Let's make it a CQC battle, where you can actually reverse The Boss's CQC, since that's something that Snake and The Boss kind of came up with together. Snake should have the opportunity to surpass his master in CQC."

Initially, when we were experimenting with this scene, we placed a lot of flowers on a flat field. Only we realized that there weren't enough to really hide in effectively. So our artists worked to reduce the number of polygons per flower, and we were able to increase the number of flowers to the point that they could be used as cover.

When you beat The Boss, the flowers turn red. Well, right around the time I came up with that idea, the Chinese film *Hero* starring Jet Li came out, and we said "Oh no! They've done what we were planning to do. They've done it before us!" so there were talks about dropping the idea entirely.

Then, someone on the team said: "No one's going to know about that movie!" Of course, the film ended up being very popular, and so everyone knows about the scene in it when the petals turn red!"

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PSP

# OWNED!

**PSP IS IN OUR HANDS, AND WE'RE NEVER LETTING IT GO!**

Few things are as satisfying as pulling a PSP out of its box. Even if you paid upwards of $500 to import the sucker, you immediately realize it was worth every penny. Seriously, few products inspire this kind of techie lust at first touch; we couldn't stop grinning — we still can't. The freakin' PSP is here, in our unworthy hands — and it's kicked our asses into the future of portable gaming!

## BROWSING THE PSP

### Meet the XMB (Cross Media Bar)

**MAIN MENU**
This is your home base — it comes up whenever you power on the system without a game inserted, or quit out of a game by pressing the Home button. From here, you can navigate to the "Saved Data Utility" (save game manager) sub-screen, play a UMD game or run a game from the Memory Stick (if you've got one on there). Pressing left on the D-Pad take you to three very similar screens, one for viewing videos, one for music listening, and one for photo browsing. The background always stays the same — the on-screen text just "slides" left or right. The "bands" in the background animate fluidly, almost like a lava lamp.

**SAVED DATA**
Selecting the "Saved Data Utility" icon brings up sub-menus that have custom art and backgrounds to represent each game you have a save for. The save's creation time/date and size are displayed, but if you press Triangle at this point, you open the data manager sidebar, which lets you copy, delete, or view more detailed info on the save data.

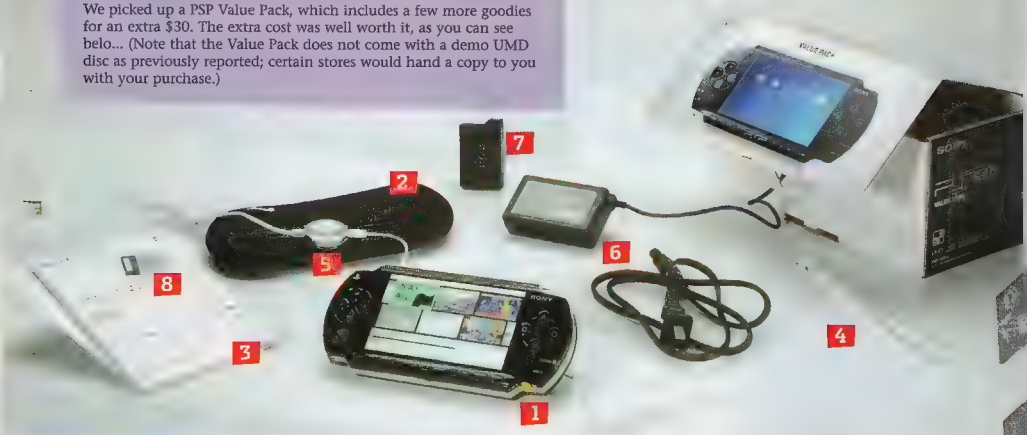
**MEDIA SPLASH**
Once you pop a UMD into the PSP, you can let the system sit for a moment and, in most games, the XMB background will change to a pretty piece of art from the game, and a looping video of gameplay is shown in a small window — a very nice touch. Leave it on a UMD movie or music icon, and you'll be treated to a similar custom-ized screen.

**SYSTEM SETTINGS**
This is where you configure the PSP to your liking, from creating network connections and updating the PSP's operating system via wi-fi, to changing the time & date; one of the extra special touches of the PSP is that the XMB background color is different for every month — white for January, green for May, yellow for October, etc.

**PLAYBACK PAUSE**
While listening to music or watching movies, the L and R buttons are used to skip backwards for forwards through chapters. You can also hit Home at any time to pause the video or music, change system settings, then return right where you left off by pressing Select again.

# OPENING THE BOX

We picked up a PSP Value Pack, which includes a few more goodies for an extra $30. The extra cost was well worth it, as you can see belo... (Note that the Value Pack does not come with a demo UMD disc as previously reported; certain stores would hand a copy to you with your purchase.)




## PLAYING WITH THE PSP

Chris somehow got into a staring contest with his system.

Even Kaiser's Nintendo DS wanted to check out the PSP.

Justin admires the wide viewing angle; Eric scoffs at it.

Scarred for life by N-Gage, Randy tries to "side-talk" on PSP.

### 1. PSP

Good thing this was in there, or we would've had to have a really difficult Japanese discussion with the sales clerk. No matter how many pictures you've seen of the PSP, when you finally pull yours out of the box, your jaw will drop.

### 2. SLIPCASE

Very much like a slipcase you'd put your glasses in, the material feels like a wetsuit. It's not padded and won't add much protection to your PSP against drops, but it should keep it from getting scratched up just fine.

### 3. MANUAL

Surely boring, but somewhat helpful, presuming you read Japanese. All we can tell you is that it smells kind of nice. That, and it's filled with at least 20 pages of caution symbols. Ah, paranoia!

### 4. HANDSTRAP

Nice quality, but we're still not sure about the stark white, '80s *Miami Vice* vibe coming off it. The little square, triangle, circle, X design on the strap is nice, though... We'll wear it out as a test and see what kind of looks we get.

### 5. HEADPHONES

These earbuds are about as good as earbuds generally are, so true audiophiles will want to upgrade to a better headset with deeper bass. You can plug any headphones directly into the PSP, but you'll probably want to plug your headphones into the remote that comes with Sony's earbuds (used to adjust volume, pause, skip tracks, etc.).

### 6. POWER SUPPLY

This comes in two parts: the cable/box that plus into the PSP, and the standard PS2-type power cord that plugs into that. We're not 100% sure, but it would probably work with your PS2 power cord.

### 7. BATTERY

The PSP battery pack comes about halfway charged, which was fantastic because we couldn't have waited another minute to play *Ridge Racers*. Another pack, or two, should be the very first accessories any PSP owner buys.

### 8. 32MB MEMORY STICK DUO

Fine for saving games, but if you're serious about putting movies or music onto your PSP, 32MB just won't do. Also, this is the non-Pro version, which means the data transfer rate isn't quite as snappy as it could be. These tiny sticks are really cool to use with a game system, so long as you don't accidentally lose them.

## GETTING OURS

Long lines of hardcore Tokyo gamers have become a familiar sight at Japanese console launches, and PSP's debut was no exception. With initial shipments low, the PlayStation faithful lined up overnight in freezing conditions to make sure they got their PSP. Sony top dog (and "father of the PlayStation") Ken Kutaragi dropped by the larger shopping districts to see the scene first hand, and even sold the first PSP himself.

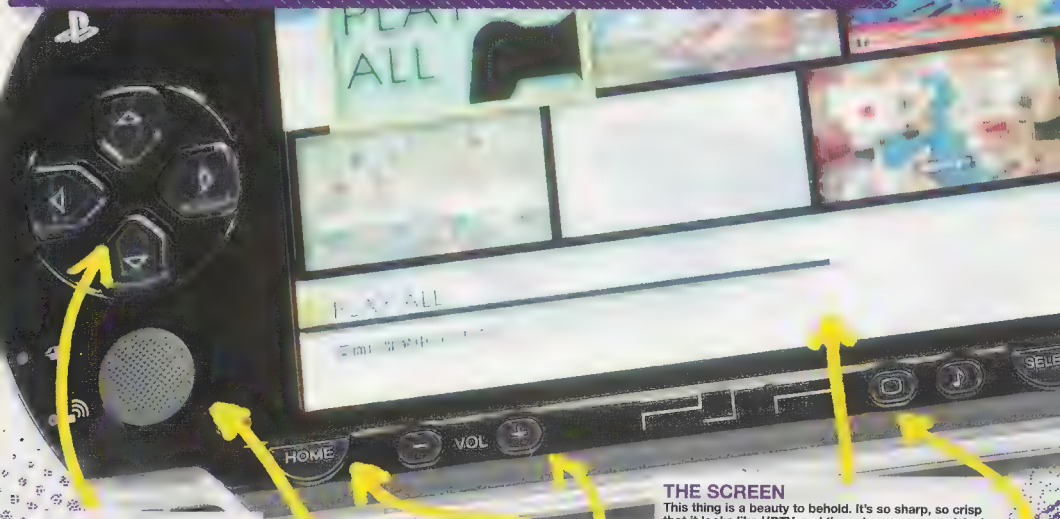
Imagine our surprise then, when we showed up at one of the bigger electronic shops in Sendai to find not one person in line. There was a table set up outside to sell PSPs before the store even opened, but nobody was there — not even so much as a tumbleweed rolling by. We walked up, grabbed our system and all the games, and still had time to pick up a second unit at a smaller shop in a neighboring town.

We guess it just goes to show that, outside of Tokyo, console launches are much more laid back. Still, by mid-day almost every shop in Japan was sold out, and less-scrupulous entrepreneurs were selling PSPs online for $500 to $1,000 or more. Some jerks were even paying the homeless to stand in line, carrying away dozens of units that no doubt ended up gouging real gamers on eBay. Sigh.

Stores in Tokyo had massive overnight lines. Sendai had none.

# HARDWARE HANDS-ON

We're tired of reading hardware specs — here's what it's really like to use a PSP!




## D-PAD

The D-pad feels nice and smooth to the touch, and since it's all one piece under the PSP's faceplate, it moves very smoothly, too. Pulling off half- and quarter-circle moves in fighting games works well, but the pad has a slightly wider play that the Dual Shock 2's, so getting things like timing your jumps right takes a little adjustment.

## ANALOG STICK

After about 30-40 minutes of *Ridge Racers,* we'd gotten used to the analog stick. If we could suggest it, we wish the movement area was larger (it only moves a very little bit in each direction from dead center), but we had no problems whatsoever controlling our racer.

## THE SCREEN

This thing is a beauty to behold. It's so sharp, so crisp that it looks like HDTV, and the colors are super-rich. As for brightness, it's also amazing. Playing Ridge Racers, we tried lowering the brightness one notch (to the "middle" setting), and within two minutes we didn't even notice... it's definitely bright enough already. Seriously.

## BRIGHTNESS BUTTON

We like this a lot more than a brightness dial, since there's no chance of it getting tweaked when playing. It has three steps, useful for different lighting situations.

## UMD HATCH (BACK)

Slide the eject button and this baby pops open fast. If there's a UMD in the drive, it pops up fast, too. It definitely feels fragile, which is concerning. Pressing it closed reminds us of putting a tape in a camcorder, only we felt like we had to be very gentle with it — odd for a system meant for more rugged, on-the-go play.

## HOME BUTTON

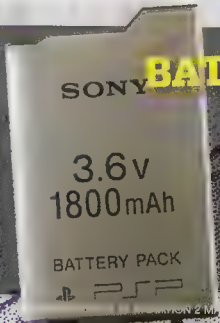
This makes a lot more sense than having to pause your games and select "exit." Instead, you simply press the Home button and the PSP asks if you really want to exit your game. If you say yes, you're taken back to the XMB. No? Then you're put right back into the game, exactly at the point you pressed Home. You can also see your volume level on this screen for fine adjustment. Overall, a very handy button indeed.

## VOLUME/SOUND

Unless you hit the home button in-game, there's no way to tell where the PSP' is set volume-wise. The buttons are smaller than we'd like; we'd have preferred a slider. As for sound quality, the tiny little speaker holes put out some bright, clear stereo sound, but it's pretty weak in bass and midrange.

## BATTERY (ON BACK)

Given the worries about battery life, and the fact that you'll need to put a fresh one in every few hours, it's nice that the battery is pretty easily accessed by a slide-off "panel." The battery itself has a little "lip" at the top to make it easier to pull out.




## BATTERY TEST

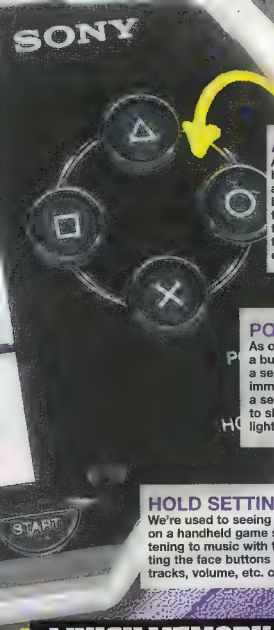
Our biggest concern has been the PSP's battery life. Sony's earlier statements, which put gameplay length for "simple" games between four to six hours, isn't exactly the type of announcement that gets cheers at E3. We put the battery to the test playing *Ridge Racers,* the most advanced launch game.

### THE SETUP

- The PSP is charged to 100%.
- The PSP is powered on and as the *Ridge Racers* logo appears, we start the clock. The game is played continuously, with minimal time spent in any menus and absolutely no replays watched. The PSP is set to 75% max volume and brightness level 3 (the highest possible when running off the battery).

### RESULTS

- At about three hours and forty-five minutes, the PSP's power light begins flashing slowly. (Note that the light stays green, it doesn't change color a la Nintendo's handhelds when the battery is low; it flashes instead.)
- At just over four hours, the game is interrupted by a flashing low battery indicator, and the unit powers down.




### ACTION BUTTONS

After the three-hour mark, we did start feeling our left hands getting a bit stiff. If you are constantly using the analog stick and need ready access to the L-shoulder button, it gets awkward after long periods of time due to the distance between the two. Also, it's kind of weird that the shoulder buttons feel "crunchy" — there are actually two very tiny "steps" when pressing them in, but that doesn't seem to serve any function.

### POWER BUTTON

As on a lot of Sony products, this is more of a slider than a button. Powering up the PSP means sliding it to "on" for a second. Putting the PSP to sleep — from which you can immediately resume a game — means holding it to "on" for a second or so in-game. To turn it off completely, you need to slide it to "on" for a few seconds, then the green power light will go off.

### HOLD SETTING

We're used to seeing these on portable CD and MP3 players, so having one on a handheld game system's a little weird. But it makes sense if you're listening to music with the PSP in your backpack; just slide it to Hold and hitting the face buttons won't mess up playback, though you can still change tracks, volume, etc. on the headphone remote.

## WHICH MEMORY STICK?

Every game has a nice, high-res, full-color icon to represent its save games on the save data manager screen.

While buying and using PS2 Memory Cards was simple and straightforward, you're going to have to put a bit more thought into PSP Memory Sticks. The 32MB Stick that comes in the PSP Value Pack will handle your save game needs for quite a while, but if you want to use your PSP for movies and music, you'll want to invest in a larger Stick.

Memory Sticks are still pretty expensive. The PSP only uses the Memory Stick Duo variety (which are smaller and meant for portable electronics), which range from $40 for 64MB to a whopping $350 for a 1GB Memory Stick Pro Duo (the Pro series offer the highest capacity, plus they have faster data transfer rates). The good news is that non-Sony brand Memory Sticks are much cheaper — SanDisk, for example, has a 1GB Pro Duo stick for around $150 (less than half what you'd pay for the Sony equivalent). And while third-party Memory Cards have a bad track record on PSone and PS2, Memory Sticks are a whole new ballgame. In fact, SanDisk is much bigger in the world of storage and flash memory devices than Sony is.

We converted a 42-minute, 350MB movie to the lowest quality PSP format video, and it ended up 124MB. At the highest quality, the file size would be about twice that. So, a 256MB Memory Stick would be just enough to watch a nice quality hour long TV episode (without commercials). However, you'd need around 750MB for a solid two-hour movie. We should have some updated benchmark tests next issue.

So there you have it. Almost four hours exactly with max brightness and more than adequate volume (especially if using headphones, which we were not). Invest in a spare battery pack, and you've got no less than eight hours of gaming (unless you're using the wireless feature, which would drain the battery faster). We also duplicated this test using the minimal brightness setting (which was actually fine for the plane flight we were on), which added about an extra hour and a half to the battery life.

Also of note, the screen didn't seem to dim at all right up to the moment when the game suddenly disappeared and the low battery icon was flashing. Very abrupt, but we had about 20 minutes warning so we can't complain.

A less powerful game such as the puzzler *Lumines*, can last for as long as six hours on similar settings. Music and movies will also drain the battery differently, but at press time we hadn't adequately tested those features on Memory Stick or UMD.

# PSM SEZ...

**CHRIS:** I am 90% blown away by Sony's little technical marvel, and 5% troubled by the little defects that have been popping up. Judging by our PSPs and those belonging to friends of ours, plus the numerous import reports online, it seems that most units have at least one thing wrong with them. So long as ours doesn't fall apart though, I'll let Sony slide a little since this is only the first batch of units.

**RANDY:** From the moment I got my hands on the final, store-bought PSP I was in tech geek heaven. This thing is the real deal. It looks so cool you want to treat it like a million-dollar sports-car, and the visuals it pumps out match its sexy exterior. It really feels worth a lot more than $180. I am concerned, though, about the defects we've seen on several units, specially the tendency for the UMD hatch to pop open while playing. Hopefully Sony will iron these quirks out for the U.S., or they're going to get a lot of angry customer service calls.

**ERIC:** It's been said before, but I'm still awed by just how, big, bright, and beautiful that PSP screen is. Now, holding it in my hands, I keep giggling like an over-stimulated little boy on a sugar high. Yeah, the battery life will be a challenge, and yeah, I'm still getting used to the analog nub, but this is one rock-a-licious gaming machine.

**KAISER:** If I had a thousand bucks, I'd easily fork it over for a PSP. It just *looks* that good. Some parts of it feel kinda cheap (see flying disc elsewhere) but the screen leaves you in an enchanted state of mind.You can't judge a book by its cover, but when it's encrusted in priceless jewels and made of solid platinum, you can't help but want it. Badly.

**JUSTIN:** Just looking at the PSP is impressive — it's such a well-designed piece of hardware/art — but getting my grubby fingers on one was just an insane experience. I just sat there and realized, "The future is now." It was just awesome. PSP definitely raises the bar.

## PSP REPORT CARD: A-

After spending every waking hour over an entire week playing PSP, we can officially declare that it's everything we were hoping for. It offers amazing graphics, A/V capabilities, and even manages to feel great in your hands. Plus, the launch games, especially Ridger Racers, are truly console quality. The number of various defects, however, is a concern — one that will hopefully be addressed before the U.S. launch.

PSP

# THE FIRST GAMES!

### RIDGE RACERS

You haven't played PSP until you've played *Ridge Racers* — this is the game to make your friends go "ooooh!" Amazing PS2-level graphics, which go even beyond PS2 in some respects thanks to the high-definition of the screen, and silky-smooth gameplay make *RR* a technical showpiece.

Gameplay-wise, this is easily the best *Ridge Racer* we've ever played. It's got over 20 different tracks, countless cars, and amazing replay value that has traditionally been the series' weakpoint. The tracks are a kind of "best of" collection from the rest of the series, and fans can even jam out to classic *RR* beats as well as new ones. You can now build up turbos by drifting through turns, and they work beautifully — especially in multiplayer. Ah, multiplayer... up to eight players can compete wirelessly, but it's still a blast with just two.

Whether you import a Japanese PSP or wait for the U.S. launch, this is the game you've got to have. It boggles our minds that we'll someday look down on this game as "what those lesser first-generation PSP titles looked like."

### VAMPIRE CHRONICLE

A fine-looking addition to Capcom's forgotten fighting series, but it's not one of those "oh, wow" games that remind you that PSP is a gazillion times better than GameBoy. We're a little concerned about the D-pad with this game... while we normally love the feel fo the pad, it sometimes seems a little tricky to pull of some classic fireball or dragon-punch movements. We'll keep at it and report back next ish.

The characters almost look painted onto the PSP's screen.

### ARMORED CORE FORMULA FRONT

This game looks and plays an awful lot like *Ridge Racers*... oh, wait — that's just because we kept playing *Ridge Racers* instead of this! Not to rag on *Armored Core* or anything, but it's got way too much Japanese for us to be able to play it, and it's some weird technical strategy game — you never actually play as a mech, you just build them and watch 'em fight. While we definitely would recommend against importing this one, we'll hold our final judgement until we can understand what the hell we're doing.

*Armored Core* meets *BattleBots* in this turn-based launch game.

Tokyo Disneyland isn't as fun as PSP.

Create combos of four same-color blocks to get the beats pumpin'.

### LUMINES

This music-themed puzzle game is the PSP's first real sleeper hit. Hardcore fans know that this is Tetsuya Mizuguchi's latest game, who gave us *Sega Rally* and the funky critical hits *Rez* and *Space Channel 5*. Basically, it's *Tetris*, but with four-square shaped blocks. As the blocks fall down you try to move them into chunks of the same color, and a vertical line comes by (at the speed of the music) to wipe the chunks off the screen. Set up several chunks to be wiped away at once and you get big combo points. Also, the music is interactive and changes depending on what you're doing. This game is funky, cool, addictive, and a great way to lay back and pass the afternoon.

*Mina No Golf Portable*, as it's called in Japan, looks as good as on PS2.

### HOT SHOTS GOLF

It's pretty much the latest *Hot Shots Golf* from PS2, but when you see it running on the small screen you'll fall in love all over again. This is the second best-looking launch game behind *Ridge Racers*, with lush, vivid colors and smooth course flybys that show off the system's sex appeal. A fun multiplayer game, and a great way to kill time during a flight from Japan to the U.S.

It's *Metal Gear* as you've never played it before... and we like it!

### METAL GEAR ACID

As appropriate a title as any, *Metal Gear Acid* both dissolves any and all preconceptions you had about *Metal Gear*, and is a head trip you're not likely to forget. Developed by a separate, younger team at Konami (*MG GBC* team members included), *Acid* somehow transposes third-person stealth action into a turn-based card strategy game.

Huh? Yeah, we thought the same thing. After playing the game firsthand, we're sure of two things: one, the pace is significantly slower; two, it looks like *Metal Gear*. Being turn-based means we had to plan moves in advance, thinking about their dire, future consequences. This takes away from the moment-to-moment suspense of other *Metal Gear* titles, but adds a more strategic angle to the game. As for the graphics, the character models and animations are ripped right out of the *Metal Gear* vaults, serving stunning, if not often static (as you wait turns) visuals.

Do we love it? Our answer is... why not? Strip away the *Metal Gear* aesthetic and you're left with what feels like a solid (no pun intended) strategy game. Throw some Snake's clothing over the whole thing, and it's easy to get lost in a strange yet mesmerizing world of *Metal Gear* all over again. Y'know, like a head trip.

## TROUBLE IN PARADISE

Just hours after the PSP went on sale, the first disturbing reports hit the 'net: all was not perfect in PSP paradise. We're not ones to overreact to a few disgruntled online gamers, but it quickly seemed that almost everyone who got their hands on a unit had experienced some kind of defect. Some were plagued with dead pixels, little dots on the screen that stayed lit one color. Others had noticeable dust stuck under the screen, buttons that would often stick when pressed, or UMD hatches that wouldn't close all the way. We also heard of at least one case where the analog stick popped off.

Our two PSPs have each frozen up — one lock up was so bad that we had to remove the battery pack to make it turn off. One has a UMD hatch that easily pops open under the pressure of a normal grip, and the other has a squeaky D-pad. It's a testament to just how f'n cool the PSP is that we're still so ga-ga over it, even having to play around these problems.

## PLAYING MOVIES, MUSIC & MORE

What could be cooler than playing movies and music on your handheld game system, especially when the sound and video quality are as good as the PSPs? Of course, the quality of your headphones will have the biggest effect on how super your sounds are, but even on Sony's basic earbuds, PSP sounds good. Transferring MP3s and images from the PC to the PSP Memory Stick is a snap, but getting movies on there has been surprisingly tricky.

There are some homemade programs floating around the 'net that will transfer video to the PSP and reformat it to better fit the screen, and Sony is offering an official transfer application on the web (in Japanese) for a few bucks. So, it's still very possible, albeit not exactly user friendly, to get your movies onto a Memory Stick. We'd really like to see this process streamlined in future PSP software updates, though.

## NEXT MONTH

We're going to keep playing the PSP day and night, so you'd better believe we'll have tons more to say next issue. We'll also report on many more games, so whatever you do, don't you dare miss next month's mag!

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**OOPS!** In his review of *Geron Da Mic* in our Holiday issue, Eric mistakenly claimed the song "Tipsy" was done by 50 Cent, rather than J-Kwon. He claims it was an honest mistake, but we suspect he himself may have spent a little too much time in da club getting tipsy while writing the review.

## HOW WE RATE GAMES

We take our reviews *very* seriously. We spend hours upon hours play-testing each game so that we can give you the absolute best information to help you buy.

Games that score an 8, 9 or 10 earn a **PSM Buy-Or-Die** Award. We don't hand these beauties out easily, so if you see one on a review or anywhere else, you'll want to be sure to check that game out.

Finally, when looking up past scores, keep in mind that older games usually wouldn't fare as well if reviewed today since the bar is constantly being raised.

**10 CLASSIC**
A rare gem; our highest recommendation

**9 OUTSTANDING**
One of the better games you'll play all year

**8 VERY GOOD**
You can't go wrong

**7 GOOD**
A solid game

**6 OKAY**
Kind of fun, but no big deal

**5 SO-SO**
You've got to really love the subject matter

**4 LACKING**
Big flaws really hurt this game

**3 BAD**
Not fun at all

**2 AWFUL**
This game is an insult

**1 WHY?**
Why would anyone do this to us?

TWO HOT TO HANDLE

# CHAMPIONS: RETURN TO ARMS

PSM BUY OR DIE!

## PS2's best Action RPG now takes re-quests

Holy *Deja Vu*! Just a year ago, *Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest* blew us away with Action RPG goodness. Now, almost exactly a year later, a sequel recreates its grocery list of cool Action RPG features, then adds in several new ones to create an even bigger package.

Everything that made the first game a standout is back: randomly generated dungeons, hundreds of weapons and items; and enhanced online and offline multiplay for four players, complete with online voice chat. And of course, it's pretty — really, really pretty, with smooth animations, dynamic lighting, and remarkably detailed, solid-looking textures.

### Level up

That's the old. Here's the new. The original five classes have been joined by two new ones: the Vah Shir Berserker, essentially a feline, slightly less beefy Barbarian with the added ability to summon throwing axes, and the Iksar Shaman, a reptilian spell-caster who's also no slouch with a weapon. They look fabulous and fit perfectly into the existing roster.

Also new is the Arena, an online/offline survival mode in which you create a character and fight off wave after wave of increasingly deadly enemies. There's also an online PvP match in which two players can face off. Luckily, you won't lose items or gear if defeated — but your bragging rights will be toast.

Another fun, new feature is Medal Rounds, challenging mini-levels that are unlocked every time you complete a world, and which range from defeating powerful enemies to a *Pac-Man*-like run through a maze, stomping frogs and avoiding kobolds.

### Chinks in the armor

Medal Rounds actually add so much variety to the gameplay that we wish they were integrated into the main game, because it can get a little tedious. This is due to a few small factors which, when combined, are the reason that we rated this game a point lower than its predecessor.

First off, the story execution falls a bit short. Having a moral choice (see sidebar) is great, but you have to make it before you have any idea what the

The Shaman and Berserker are new, but the five existing classes have all been reworked too, and the level cap has been raised to 80.

New classes, 50+ new areas, new enemies ... it's incredible that Snowblind managed to create so much content in only a year — their artists must be exhausted.

CHAMPIONS: RETURN TO ARMS
PUBLISHED BY Sony Online
DEVELOPED BY Snowblind
RETAIL PRICE $49.99
PLAYERS 1-4
MULTIPLAYER 2-4 players online and off
ESRB RATING Average to Teen
GENRE Action, Real-time play, Online Play

TRY THIS

+Learn to block! It's very helpful, and you don't need a shield to do it — any melee weapons will do. Also, never discard found weapons or armor just because you have something better — use a gate scroll to return to your base and sell them for a profit.

## "THERE'S A SHORTAGE OF GREAT MULTIPLAYER CO-OP GAMES IN THIS WORLD BUT, THIS IS DEFINITELY ONE OF THEM"

Thanks to a new online Player vs. Player arena, tough guys and gals can now put their money where their mouths are.

main quest is. Speaking of which, you may play several hours into the game before anyone tells you just what's going on. There are also fewer secondary characters adding to the story, like Vanarhost or the "Orc" you chased through the first game.

There's no "Act One, Act Two, etc." division this time, and you have the same home base throughout. Plus, this game is just flat-out bigger than the first. These aren't liabilities, but they also don't help keep things fresh. Finally, I know weapon and item drops are random, but I'd swear that flaming swords and other such elementally endowed weapons are much more rare than before. As someone whose absolute favorite memory of the first game is carving up enemies with a sword that did both flame and ice damage, this was disappointing.

This seems like quite a list of shortcomings, but the truth is that these are mostly minor quibbles. There's a shortage of great multiplayer co-op games in this world, but this is definitely one of them.

ERIC BRATCHER

**PSM SCORE 8.0**

**FIRIONA**
+New classes are cool, same great multiplay, several new modes of play.

**NATASLA**
–Poor storytelling, few elemental weapons, more variety needed in main game.

**HOW IT STACKS UP**

| | |
|---|---|
| Champions Of Norrath | 9 |
| Champions: Return To Arms | 8 |
| The Bard's Tale | 8 |
| Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance | 8 |
| Hunter: The Reckoning Wayward | 8 |

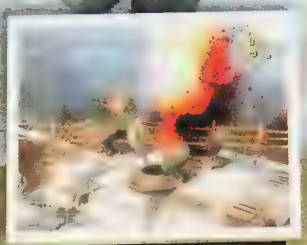
NICE MEET NAUGHT

### A tale of two pretties

New to *C: RtA* is the player's option to tell the lovely Firiona Vie to find a new lapdog and instead play as an evil character. The plot doesn't change much, but you follow a different game path and you're playing gopher for a different beauty: the cold-hearted, equally alluring Natasla.

"YOU CAN COMPLETE CONTRACTS PRETTY MUCH ANY WAY YOU SEE FIT"

C4 is a great tool to demolish obstacles, but make sure to get out of the blast radius.



The mercs automatically toss a grenade into a tank when you jack it — meaning you're driving around in a tank filled with bad guy body parts.

GRAND THEFT ARMY

# Mercenaries

## Here they come to save the day... for big bucks!

*Mercenaries* can be pretty much summed up as *Grand Theft Auto Joins the Army* — but there's simultaneously less and more to it than just that. Sure, you're jacking vehicles in a virtual sandbox like in *GTA*, but *Mercenaries* gives you even more methods of mayhem: everything from simple firearms to tanks, helicopters and jet-borne, Pay-Per-Play carpet bombing, all made available via your handy dandy PDA. Just select the vehicles and/or supplies that you want, and have them air-dropped to your location — it's as simple as that, though it'll cost you some cash.

In this respect, the game truly shines, outsandboxing even *GTA* — you can complete contracts pretty much any way you see fit. For example, when you're hunting down a target, you could shoot your way through the main road and risk being killed en route to your target; or you could jack a helicopter and fly directly over your target and shoot him from the air instead; or you could just purchase a cruise missile strike and blow the whole place to kingdom come. Sure, you get less money for kills than for live captures, but, hey, it gets the job done.

### What's My Motivation?

Unfortunately, there's very little in terms of storyline and characterization to fuel your motivation. The basic premise of capturing or killing each person in the villainous "Deck of 52" — including your ultimate goal, General Song, the Ace of Spades — is sound, but there're no major developments to keep you interested. You just complete contracts for the four factions — Allied Nations, Russian Mafia, South Korea, and China — until you get some intel on the general location of a card. Then, you go catch or kill him and repeat as needed. There are some attempts at fleshing out your various contacts during each mission briefing, but it feels more like filler before you get to the action than an actual attempt at character development. A few more cutscenes probably would have helped.

It is interesting how certain contracts make you turn against your former allies, making them turn against you, but the main game never really changes as a result — just bribe a faction (except the North Koreans, who remain the villains no matter what) with enough cash, and you'll be back in that

Make sure to follow your compass to locate those hard-to-find cards/bounties.

It seems obvious, but you can sometimes forget in the heat of battle: take cover!

faction's good graces. And the game's villains seem like nothing more than a device to keep the missions going. You're only going after the "Deck of 52" because they're the bad guys and they're worth money — no more, no less. It just lacks the emotional investment necessary to keep you engaged.

The game tosses in some side missions, such as racing from point A to point B in a certain amount of time, but it never really offers the sheer amount of variety that *GTA* does — and it's certainly not as fun to cruise around a war-torn battlefield instead of a lively metropolis — so there's little to capture your interest outside of the main missions.

*Mercenaries* controls substantially better than *GTA* — no target-lock issues here — and the A.I. is pretty clever, for the most part. There are occasions when the A.I. will make bad decisions, but it never becomes too problematic. And the graphics look markedly better than *GTA*, though the game still suffers from many of the same glitches; most notably, pop-in, and the omnipresent fog to hide it, is too common — especially when you're piloting a helicopter.

Still, while these shortcomings might keep *Mercenaries* from greatness, the open-ended nature of gameplay — and the simple fact that it's fun to blow things up — makes for a good, entertaining game. **JUSTIN CHENG**

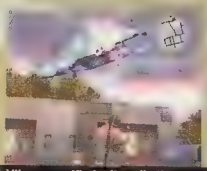
**PSM SCORE 8.0**

**YOU'RE HIRED**
+Gameplay gives you countless options, graphics are better than *GTA*.

**YOU'RE FIRED**
−Lack of story makes for poor adventure; no multiplayer play; graphical glitches.

**HOW IT STACKS UP**

| | |
|---|---|
| Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas | 10 |
| Grand Theft Auto: Vice City | 9 |
| Mercenaries | 8 |
| True Crime: Streets of LA | 8 |
| Mafia | 7 |

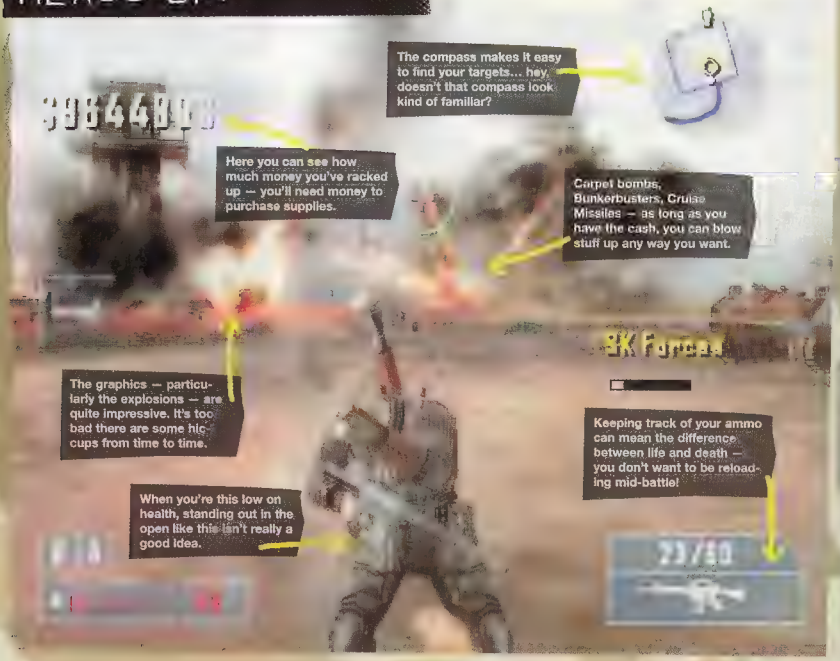


Y'know, a rifle isn't really the most effective weapon to use against a helicopter...

...an RPG, on the other hand, works quite nicely. Check out that explosion!

You could blow the enemies' vehicles up, but why not jack them instead?

## HEADS UP!


The compass makes it easy to find your targets... hey, doesn't that compass look kind of familiar?
Here you can see how much money you've racked up — you'll need money to purchase supplies.
Carpet bombs, Bunkerbusters, Cruise Missiles — as long as you have the cash, you can blow stuff up any way you want.
The graphics — particularly the explosions — are quite impressive. It's too bad there are some hiccups from time to time.
When you're this low on health, standing out in the open like this isn't really a good idea.
Keeping track of your ammo can mean the difference between life and death — you don't want to be reloading mid-battle!

**MERCENARIES**

**PUBLISHED BY** LucasArts

**MADE BY** Pandemic

**HOW MUCH?** $49.99

**ESRB RATING** Teen

**MULTIPLAYER** No

**DIFFICULTY** Average to hard

**SUPPORT** +Pro Logic II

**TRY THIS**

+Stranded and low on health? Use the Medivac option to get back to your M.A.S.H. It'll set you back $1,000, but it saves time and effort, and both health and ammo will be refilled.

KILL THE SINNERS, FRANK... KILL THE SINNERS...
NUTS TO THAT -- YOU ALSO SAID TO BUY CELINE DION TICKETS, AND WE BOTH KNOW HOW THAT TURNED OUT.

Ah, shotguns... perfect for close-range combat — and you can dual-wield them!

# "THAT MEANS A HIGH BODY COUNT — AND BLOODY GOOD ENTERTAINMENT"

When you get up close to an enemy, you can choose to either kill him instantly or use him as a human shield.

Though the game occasionally holds back on the gore, it's still not for the squeamish.

PSM BUY OR DIE!

BULLET IN THE HEAD

# The Punisher

## The bloodiest — and the best — comic book game in town

**THE PUNISHER**

**PUBLISHED BY** THQ

**MADE BY** Volition

**HOW MUCH?** $49.99

**ESRB RATING** Mature

**MULTIPLAYER** No

**DIFFICULTY** Adjustable

**SUPPORTS** +Nothin' fancy

**TRY THIS**

+Interrogate as many criminals as you can. Each interrogation restores your health, and you can occasionally unlock some interesting flashbacks. Even better, some criminals give you helpful hints or access to hidden weapon stockpiles.

It was once generally accepted that licensed games suck — especially when they're based upon a comic-book-turned-awful-movie. But *Spider-man 2* bucked this trend, and *The Punisher*? Well, he just blows it away.

Marvel's mass-murdering vigilante is on a quest to eradicate crime by any means necessary, and that means a high body count — and bloody good entertainment. With a story partially written by *Punisher* veterans Garth Ennis and Jimmy Palmiotti, and featuring *Max Payne*-style gameplay, *The Punisher* perfectly captures the essence of the comic books. And even if you're not a fan, you can still enjoy the ultra-violent thrills the game has to offer.

It's odd, then, that a game featuring such mature content actually feels censored. Sure, you can toss a criminal into a wood chipper, but like *Kill Bill Vol. 1*, the game turns black and white to hide the gory details. Understandably, you may not want to witness this sort of brutality, but, well, it *is The Punisher*, after all.

Also, the game takes The Punisher out of his element a bit towards in the latter part of the game. He works best when fighting armies of crack dealers and mobsters — not when he's fighting Yakuza soldiers decked out in sci-fi armor. And while adding cameos like Iron Man technically fits within the context of the Marvel universe, it doesn't really work with a character who tends to stick to Marvel's gritty, more realistic underworld.

None of this really matters when everything else works this well. This is *The Punisher* done right. **JUSTIN CHENG**

**PSM SCORE 8.0**

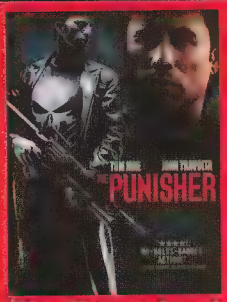
**ABOVE THE LAW**
+Captures the feel of the *Punisher* comic books; it's fun to "punish" bad guys.

**BELOW THE BELT**
–Action can get repetitive; frustrating bosses; sometimes not "mature" enough.

**HOW IT STACKS UP**

| | |
|---|---|
| The Punisher | 8 |
| James Bond 007: EON | 8 |
| Max Payne 2 | 8 |
| Hitman: Contracts | 8 |
| Red Dead Revolver | 6 |

**SILVER SCREAM**




## The Punisher's Movie Madness

The 1990 Dolph Lundgren *Punisher* movie scored an average rating of 11%, according to rottentomatoes.com, and the 2004 Thomas Jane version didn't fare much better at 28%. To his credit, however, Thomas Jane does a pretty good job as The Punisher in the game.

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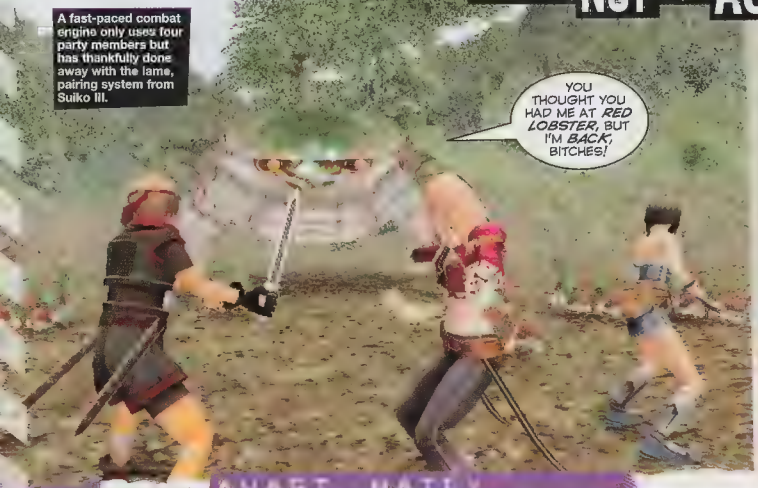
"SOMETHING SMELLS FISHY... AND IT'S NOT THE ACTUAL FISH"




A fast-paced combat engine only uses four party members but has thankfully done away with the lame, pairing system from Suiko III.

Only a very few select characters from former *Suikodens* rear their heads (and chests, as evidenced by Jeane) in *Suikoden IV*.

Special combo attacks can be learned and leveled up through use depending on the characters you put in your party.

AVAST MATEY

# Suikoden IV

## Three if by land, four if by sea

**SUIKODEN IV**

**PUBLISHED BY**
Konami

**MADE BY**
Konami

**HOW MUCH?**
$39.99

**ESRB RATING**
Teen

**MULTIPLAYER**
No

**DIFFICULTY**
Easy

**SUPPORTS**
+Progressive Scan

TRY THIS

Ah, the high seas... a vast territory filled with salty sailors, seductive sirens, and dangerous pirates. Or so you'd think, but in the fourth installment of Konami's long running and much beloved *Suikoden* series, something smells fishy — and it's not the actual fish.

To be fair, this prequel to the first three games has all the series' trademark elements: 108 recruitable characters (though many are boring), plenty of mini-games, and precious Runes which grant magic abilities. But somehow, the emotional core of the game never quite makes it to the party.

The story casts you as the fledgling leader of the series' trademark army of 108 Stars of Destiny, a person both blessed with and cursed by the True Rune of Punishment, which unleashes devastating nuclear-esque attacks, but which also eats away at your life force. Tough break.

Your journey from this point onward is to fight against a battalion of power-hungry high-seas politicos who want the power of your Rune for themselves. Sounds epic and involving, right? And the fact that your entire adventure takes place on the open ocean and several small islands sounds refreshing, correct? Sadly, this map doesn't quite lead to treasure.

The seafaring voyages are tranquilizing, wave-laden bores, broken up by ridiculously frequent combat. Luckily, you gain the ability to warp fairly early in the game. Melee battles thankfully discard *Suiko III's* crippling buddy system in favor of a more traditional method, and occasional one-on-one duels remain a cool treat for *Suiko* veterans.

The trouble is, someone forgot to inject excitement into the mix. With an uninteresting cast and bland execution of a promising storyline, you'll never really get into the plot. Thus, in a series known for memorable characters and clever features, *Suikoden IV* sadly unfolds as more of an oceanic fetch quest with only momentary flashes of interest for all but the most forgiving series fans. **FRANCESCA REYES**

**PSM SCORE 6.5**

**SEA WORTHY**
+Plenty of mini-games and playable characters; Different endings add replays.

**LAND LOCKED**
−Short; the world is fairly small and limited, starts off slowly, kinda boring.

**HOW IT STACKS UP**

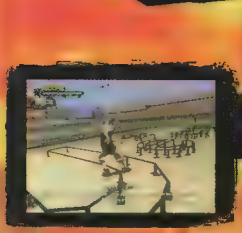
| | |
|---|---|
| Suikoden II | 9 |
| Suikoden III | 9 |
| Suikoden | 8 |
| Star Ocean: TTEOT | 7.5 |
| Suikoden IV | 6.5 |

BATTLESHIP

## Sink Or Swim

*Suikoden IV* introduces tactical, ship-to-ship naval battles, which utilize a Rochambeau-style attack system with elemental cannons and a grid-based map. They're okay, but a little too easy.

# GET RAIL RATED!



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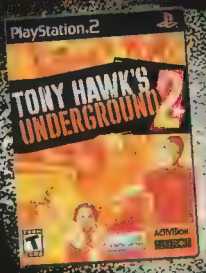
# TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2

PlayStation.2 NEVERSOFT ONLINE ACTIVISION. Jeep




TEEN

Blood
Crude Humor
Language
Suggestive Themes
Use of Alcohol
Violence

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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SIR, I DON'T THINK YOU UNDERSTAND THE SIZE OF THE SUBSCRIPTION DISCOUNT I'M OFFERING!
CAN'T YOU PEOPLE SEE I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF DINNER?!

Like before, the game is all about invisible interface, so the blood on your shirt is used to show how much damage you've taken.

"IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE CLEVER IN A GUY RITCHIE KIND OF WAY, BUT IT'S REALLY JUST SORTA CONFUSING

Mitchell is wound so tight, even Dirty Harry would take him aside and say, "Hey guy, just, y'know, chill."

PSM BUY OR DIE!

LONDON CALLING

# The Getaway: Black Monday

THE GETAWAY: BLACK MONDAY

**PUBLISHED BY** SCEA

**MADE BY** Soho Studio

**HOW MUCH?** $49.99

**ESRB RATING** Mature

**MULTIPLAYER** No

**DIFFICULTY** Sociopathic

**SUPPORTS**
+Pro Logic II
+Widescreen

TRY THIS

## Build a better mayhem

The original *Getaway* was a gritty actioner that really wanted to be the UK's answer to *Grand Theft Auto III*. But, despite an eye-popping re-creation of London, a couple of awful design decisions — like no in-game map at all — just made it disappointing. Thankfully, for the sequel, Team Soho added a map for all us ignorant non-Londoners, tweaked some of the control problems, and made their virtual London even more detailed. It ain't perfect, and it's too damn short — but it's a gut-punch of a game.

Sergeant Ben Mitchell, the hardest hardcase on London's police force, learns that the Russian Mafia is supplying guns to Jamaican drug gangs. Meanwhile, former boxer and small time hood Eddie O'Connor joins on a bank job that runs him, and a young, female hacker named Sam, afoul of those same Russians and Jamaicans.

The storyline and missions jump between the three major characters, looping back to show events from different sides. I think it's supposed to be clever in a Guy Ritchie kind of way, but it's really just sorta confusing, and only the note-perfect dialog and acting keep you caring. However, the mission types vary nicely, so the gameplay never gets stale. The auto-targeting still has its quirks, but it's a big improvement, and the control seems a bit tighter than last time overall.

In fact, *Black Monday's* biggest problem is that there just isn't enough of it. The main game lasts eight, maybe ten hours, and although there are unlockable races and chases, they don't add much. It's a snack, not a meal, but it's definitely a tasty one. **JEFF LUNDRIGAN**

**PSM SCORE 8.0**

**CHASE IT DOWN**
+Most accurate virtual city, great acting, and some well-designed action.

**THROW IT OUT**
−Stealth missions are way off the mark, you still heal by leaning against walls, short.

**HOW IT STACKS UP**

| | |
|---|---|
| GTA: San Andreas | 10 |
| GTA: Vice City | 9 |
| The Getaway: Black Monday | 8.0 |
| The Getaway | 7 |
| Driv3r | 4 |

Of course, there are tons of cars and trucks in the game, but a two-wheeler is sometimes easier to get through narrow alleys.

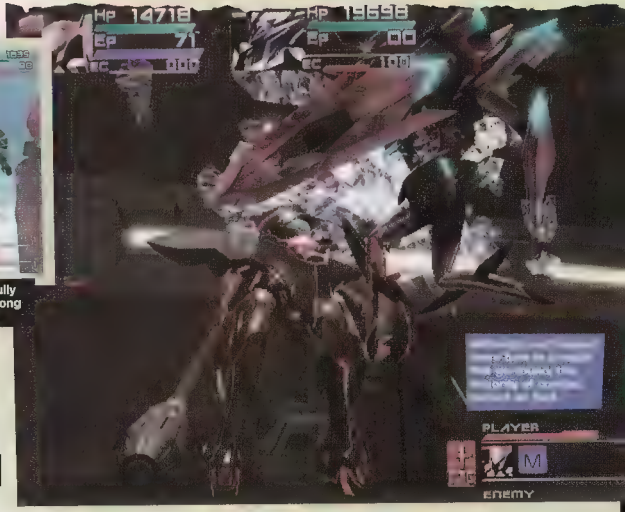
WHAT'S STEALTH

Sam's actually kinda cute in a "you're speaking English, but I still need the subtitles on" kind of way.

## One Step Back

Ah, wee Sam and her "stealth" missions — except they aren't so much stealth missions as "use trial and error to find the only route through a level that won't get you killed" missions. In a way, it's cool you have to use brains rather than brawn, but it's mostly up to dumb luck rather than planning. They really kinda suck, and you wind up having to restart them constantly.

Don't underestimate that bow. When fully stocked up, MOMO's bow attack is strong enough to make Sam Jackson proud.



"ONCE YOU LEARN EACH ENEMY'S WEAK SPOT ALL BATTLES BECOME TRIVIAL"

RPG LITE

# Xenosaga *Episode II: Jenseits von Gut und Bose*

## Short & sweet, but not very filling

The original *Xenosaga* was renowned for its complex story and in-depth plot, but ridiculed for its overuse of cinematic cutscenes. While the reliance on movies has been reduced for the second installment, the game has also evolved into a simpler experience.

Watching the story unfold in *Episode II* is something of a mixed blessing. The backstory is solid, but the direction and pacing is haphazard. Characters are introduced and then dropped, typically with no explanation other than "the bad man wants to fight you now."

Gameplay itself consists of running from point A to B in order to trigger the next cutscene or fight the next boss. Linearity is the rule, so don't expect to wander and explore any living environment, even with the optional side quests.

Unlike its predecessor, *Episode II* has no money and therefore no shops. As a result, players will end up hoarding everything for boss battles because you never know when you will be able to replace that generic healing potion. Equipment such as armor has also been removed — the only way to increase your stats is by leveling up or learning skills.

Combat is decidedly non-strategic now. Skills allow the characters to learn ether (spells) or raise their stats, but because all characters can learn all skills, you can effectively play the game with your initial party of three. It's definitely customizable, but not very strategic. The same is true of combat — every enemy has a fatal Achilles' Heel. Once you learn a combo to exploit it, all battles become trivial.

Fans of the series will no doubt devour and enjoy *Xenosaga II*, but with these troubles and a mere 20-25 hours of play (including movies) those who aren't devoted fans should avoid this.

**ADAM PAVLACKA**

The art direction might be more realistic, but hot, female androids still manage to fight in high heels.

**PSM SCORE 6.0**

**LEVELING UP**
+Realistic character designs, bonus items and an included epilogue mission.

**EXPERIENCE LOST**
−Flat voice acting, load times are fat, repetitive level design, no stores.

**HOW IT STACKS UP**

| | |
|---|---|
| Shadow Hearts: Covenant | 10 |
| Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne | 7.5 |
| Star Ocean: TTEOT | 7.5 |
| Xenosaga | 7 |
| Xenosaga II | 6 |

**XENOSAGA II**

**PUBLISHED BY** Namco

**MADE BY** Monolith Soft

**HOW MUCH?** $49.99

**ESRB RATING** Mature

**MULTIPLAYER** No

**DIFFICULTY** Average

**SUPPORTS** +ProLogic II

**CUTTING IN LINE**

### Boost, Baby, Boost!

Mastering the boost attack allows your characters to attack in quick succession during the same turn without giving the enemy a chance to recover. Timed properly this can rain down much destruction but be aware, your opponent can boost as well.

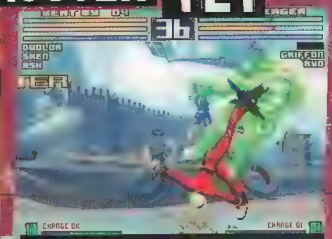
Remember to break your opponent before boosting in a friend in order to get the maximum benefit.

**TRY THIS**

+Use an enemy down attack to temporarily incapacitate opponent so they're unable to attack by your team mates. Remember that this can multiple times, ranging from causing b... Jus...

Terry Bogard knows when to trade in the sleeveless shirt and hat for some nice fall wear from Ambercrombie & Fitch. You reading this, Ryu?

## "THIS IS PERHAPS THE BEST KOF ROSTER YET"



Like Capcom, SNK really needs to take the plunge and draw up some nice, super high-res sprites like those nice boys over at Sammy have.

ROYAL BATTLE

KING OF FIGHTERS 02/03

**PUBLISHED BY** SNK NeoGeo

**MADE BY** SNK Playmore/ Eolith

**HOW MUCH?** $39.99

**ESRB RATING** Teen

**MULTIPLAYER** 2-player versus

**DIFFICULTY** Adjustable

**SUPPORT** +No extras

# King of Fighters 02/03

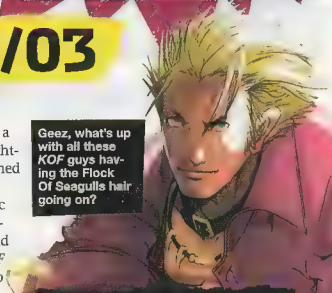
## A bit of the old, a bit of the new

*King of Fighters* remains a series that is largely overshadowed by *Street Fighter*, and, unfortunately, this double-pack probably won't do much to change that. These games, however, present an excellent opportunity for *SF* fans to try something a little different.

*KOF '02* is sort of like *KOF '98*, in that it gathers fan favorites from throughout the series and has them beat each other senseless in classic *KOF* style. The graphics aren't particularly impressive — the game looks slightly better than prior efforts — but it's perhaps the best *KOF* roster yet, and it's a great history lesson for newbies.

*KOF '03*, on the other hand, takes a step forward. The game improves slightly upon the classic graphics that defined the series, making the visuals look almost modern — though still archaic when compared to other recent fighting games (especially *Guilty Gear*). And like the Capcom "Versus" games, *KOF '03* now gives you the option to swap characters mid-battle, which adds another layer of depth.

Even with these changes, *KOF '03* doesn't rock the boat too much; it's still *KOF* at its core — which will certainly please the fans that have been playing the game throughout the past decade. **JUSTIN CHENG**



Geez, what's up with all these *KOF* guys having the Flock Of Seagulls hair going on?

**PSM SCORE 7.0**

**REGAL**
+ *02* is arguably the best *KOF* since *Evolution; '03*'s graphics have improved.

**WRETCHED**
- Graphics still aren't that great, newer fighters aren't as cool as the older ones.

GOTTA KNOW WHEN TO HOLD EM.

# World Championship Poker

## Lose your shirt without losing your shirt

You can make your own characters look just a goofy as you want, but in this guy's case, it's an improvement...

**PSM SCORE 7.0**

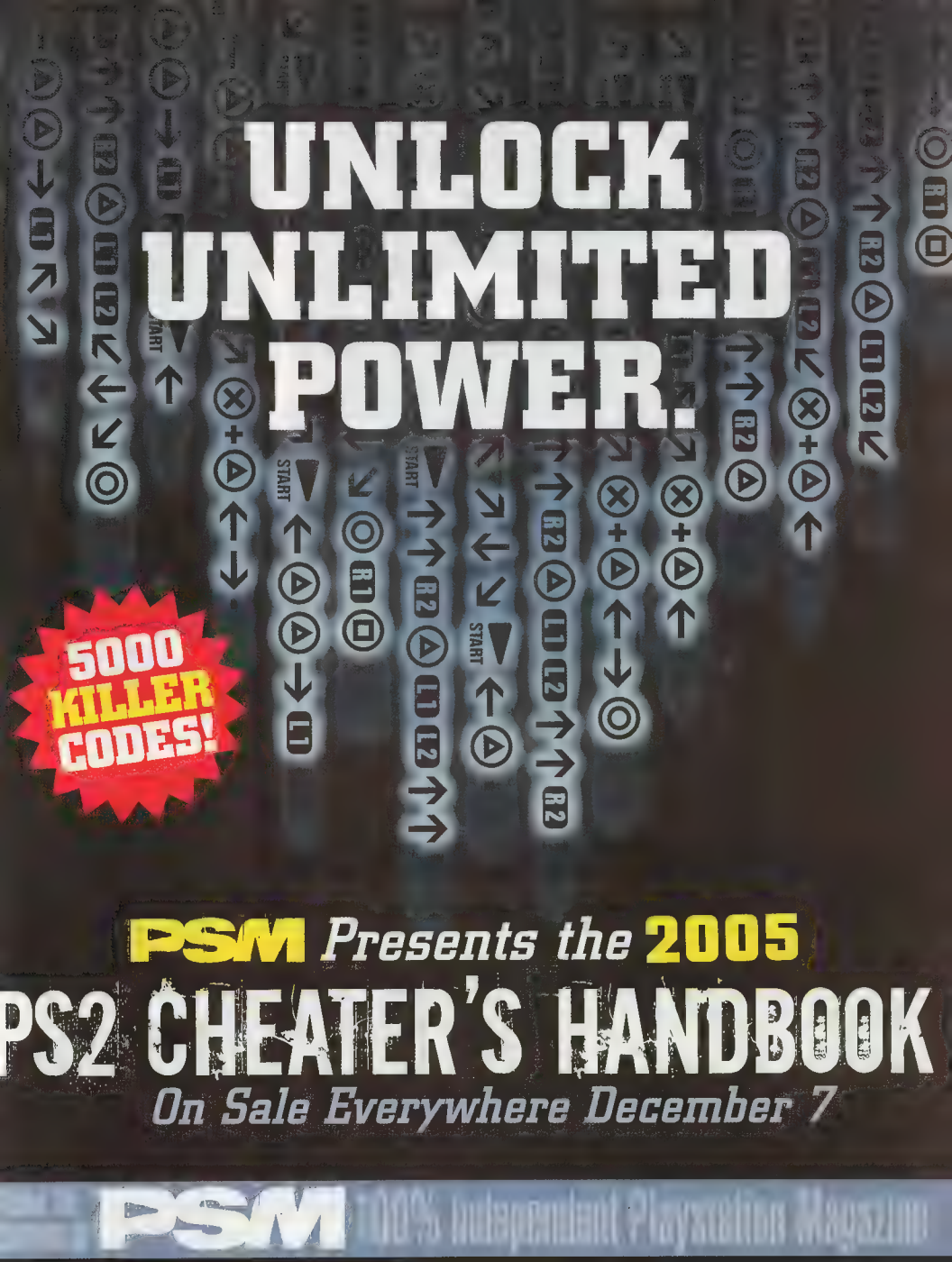
**ROYAL FLUSH**
+Reasonably astute AI makes winning the tournaments enough of a challenge.

**TOILET FLUSH**
- Character models are hammy, and sometimes the play is just plain dumb.

to keep you occupied, and its look and style reminds one of those high-pres-

you're seeing on TV, this one rates as

**+PUBLISHED BY** Crave Entertainment **+ MADE BY** Coresoft **+ HOW MUCH?** $19.99 **+ ESRB** Everyone **+MULTIPLAYER** 1-6 players online **+ DIFFICULTY** That depends on your opponent, doesn't it? **+ SUPPORTS** Logitech/PS2 Headset, Network Adaptor, EyeToy USB Camera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On Sale Everywhere December 7
PSM
100% Independent Playstation Magazine

"THE EMULATION IS DEAD-ON"

PSM BUY OR DIE!

STELLA LIVES!

# Atari Anthology

## A great big kiss for retro fans

**ATARI ANTHOLOGY**

**PUBLISHED BY** Atari

**MADE BY** Digital Eclipse

**HOW MUCH?** $19.99

**ESRB RATING** Everyone

**MULTIPLAYER** 1-4 player head to head offline

**DIFFICULTY** Variable

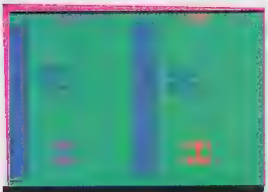
**SUPPORT** +Progressive Scan (480p) +Multitap

This massive, budget-priced title collects no fewer than 85 games from Atari's golden days: 18 arcade classics like *Centipede, Tempest, Pong, and Battlezone*, and 67 culled from the Atari 2600's vast library: *Yars' Revenge, Adventure* (complete with the industry's first Easter Egg), *Combat*, and three of the four planned *SwordQuest* games. The emulation is dead-on too, so everything plays perfectly.

Okay, not exactly perfectly. Games that originally controlled with a trackball or paddle controller don't handle quite as well with a Dual Shock 2, but adjustable sensitivity greatly helps paddle games like *Tempest* and *Demons to Diamonds*. There are also alternate game modes which feature double speed, slightly enhanced graphics and so on. There's also a ton of supplemental art for the fans: scans of box art and owner's manuals, arcade cabinet art, etc.

Admittedly, all of these games have aged, and not all 85 were classics to begin with — no gamer anywhere ever said "Man, I wish Atari would re-release *Math Gran Prix!*" Some of the most famous 2600 titles are missing too *(Pac-Man, Space Invaders, E.T., Basketball)*, mostly due to licensing restrictions. However, there remain plenty of great games here, and with a price that works out to less than a quarter a game, you'll get more than your money's worth. **ERIC BRATCHER**

Paddle games like *Breakout* will seem almost uncontrollable until you adjust the analog sensitivity (it's in each game's option menu).



Remember how Atari used to cram in 50 slight variations of each game into every cartridge? They're ALL here.

PSM SCORE 8.0

**ASTEROIDS**
+A serious dose of nostalgic bliss, TONS of games, lots of bonus goodies.

**HEMORRHOIDS**
−Some of the bigger games are missing, and the paddle games control badly.

THAT DEAF DUMB AND BLIND KID...

# Pinball Hall of Fame: The Gottlieb Collection

## Are you old enough to appreciate the nostalgia?

Originally, pinball was a lot more random, like pachinko, but the addition of the flipper in 1947 changed everything (No joke!).

The graphics aren't half bad — they've even modeled the reflection of the backglass on the playfield's glass cover.

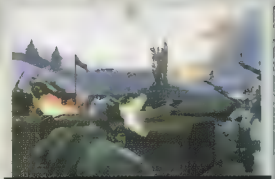
PSM SCORE 7.5

**ROLL O' QUARTERS**
+Enough tables to keep you entertained, with instructions on how to get high score.

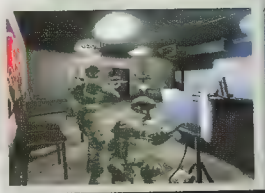
**EMPTY POCKETS**
−Ball physics lack that extra edge of weight and fidelity in other pinball sims.

+**PUBLISHED BY** Crave Entertainment + **MADE BY** Far Sight studios + **HOW MUCH?** $14.99 + **ESRB** Everyone +**MULTIPLAYER** 1-4 players offline + **DIFFICULTY** Easy + **SUPPORTS** Vibration function

Some of the graphical techniques are borrowed from the gorgeous *Splinter Cell*, though the non-SC bits are of lower quality.



The physics are really exaggerated, so expect lots of flying bodies — even without the exploding barrels.



The Supremacy mode in which players capture a series of nodes is one of the good online features, but it's too little, too late.

**GHOST RECON 2**

**PUBLISHED BY** Ubisoft

**MADE BY** Ubisoft Shanga

**HOW MUCH?** $49.99

**ESRB RATING** Teen

**MULTIPLAYER** 1-16 players online

**DIFFICULTY** Varies

**SUPPORT** +Voice Headset +Pro Logic II +Online

EXORCISED

# Ghost Recon 2

## As transparent as they come

They say that sequels are never as good as the original, and with *Ghost Recon 2*, truer words have never been spoken.

Marking a radical change for the series, what was once a tactical first-person shooter is now a mindless third-person shoot-a-thon. While this isn't inherently a bad thing, enemy AI that changes with the wind and level design that's inspired by tunnel vision drops this game into the lower echelon of military shooters.

There are some redeeming qualities to the game, namely improved graphics, a more intuitive interface for issuing squad commands, and a decent online multiplayer mode. But again, rough spots in each area drag the game back down to the level of pure mediocrity.

Unfortunately, this reworking of the franchise has kept little of its original soul, character, and intensity. As sad as it makes us to say it, if this is a sign of things to come, then we hope this is one ghost that stays dead.

**KAISER HWANG**

**"WE HOPE THIS IS ONE GHOST THAT STAYS DEAD"**

**PSM SCORE 5.5**

**GHOST DOG**
+Better graphics than previous games, user-friendly interface

**GHOST DAD**
-The AI can be really fickle, uninspired level design, no sense of pacing

BLONDE BOMB, NO SHELL

# Death By Degrees

## Queen Of The Iron Fist

Nina's character model is smashing, and her clothes take damage as she does.

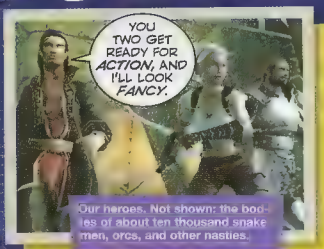
**PSM SCORE 7.0**

**BLACK BELT**
+The environments look nice, and the martial arts moves are well animated.

**WHITE BELT**
-The dual analog sticks simply have too many moves mapped to them.

+**PUBLISHED BY** Namco + **MADE BY** Namco + **HOW MUCH?** $49.99 + **ESRB RATING** Mature +**MULTIPLAYER** Nope. Try *Tekken* + **DIFFICULTY** Eye candy to thumb breaker + **SUPPORTS** Nothing

# SCOREBOARD




Our heroes. Not shown: the bodies of about ten thousand snake men, orcs, and other nasties.

SICK PICK

## Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone

When the demo of this gorgeous, team-based hack-and-slasher first arrived in our offices, Justin scoffed, "It's not even on my radar." He then sat down and played it for two days straight, killing every bad guy in the *D&D* universe. And that was just the *demo*!

| GAME NAME | SCORE | ISS |
|---|---|---|
| .hack//QUARANTINE | 7... | 80 |
| Ace Combat 5: TUW | 9.5 | 92 |
| AirForce Delta Strike | 6... | 82 |
| Alias | 6... | 80 |
| Alien Hominid | 8... | 92 |
| All Star Baseball 2006 | 7... | 80 |
| Ape Escape | 6... | 68 |
| Armored Core: Nexus | 7... | 80 |
| Asterix And Obelix: XL | 5... | 80 |
| Astro Boy | 6... | 80 |
| Athens 2004 | 6... | 68 |
| ATV Offroad Fury 3 | 6... | 68 |
| Backyard Wrestling 2 | 5.5 | 68 |
| Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II | 8... | 88 |
| The Bard's Tale | 8... | 88 |
| Battle Assault 3: FGS | 7... | 80 |
| Battlestar Galactica | 5... | 68 |
| BloodRayne 2 | 5... | 68 |
| Blood Will Tell | 5... | 68 |
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| Burnout 3: Takedown | 9.5... | 90 |
| Cabela's Dangerous Hunts | 7... | 80 |
| Cabela's Deer Hunt 2005 Season | 8... | 90 |
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| Crash 'N Burn | 8.5... | 90 |
| Crimson Sea 2 | 6... | 68 |
| Crimson Tears | 5... | 68 |
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| Digimon Rumble Arena 2 | 3... | 70 |
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| Ghost Recon: JS | 8... | 92 |
| Ghosthunter | 8... | 88 |
| Ghost In The Shell: SAC | 7... | 92 |
| Godzilla: Save The Earth | 6... | 68 |
| GoldenEye: Rogue Agent | 6... | 68 |
| Gradius V | 8... | 88 |
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| Grezzly NHL 2006 | 6... | 68 |
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| Guilty Gear Isuka | 8... | 88 |
| The Guy Game | 6... | 68 |
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| LOTR: The Third Age | 7... | 92 |
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| Mafia | 7... | 83 |
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| MX Unleashed | 7.5... | 83 |
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| NBA Ballers | 8... | 86 |
| NBA Live 2005 | 8... | 87 |
| NCAA Football 2005 | 10... | 90 |
| NCAA March Madness '05 | 8.5... | 90 |
| Neo Contra | 6.5... | 76 |
| NFL Quarterback 2 | 6... | 80 |
| NFL Street | 9... | 92 |
| NHL 2005 | 8... | 88 |
| Nightmare Of Druaga | 5... | 68 |
| Nightshade | 6... | 68 |
| Onimusha: Blade Warriors | 7... | 80 |
| Pool Paradise | 6... | 68 |
| Prince Of Persia: Warrior Within | 10... | 91 |
| Pal-Ops: TMC | 7... | 80 |
| R: Racing Evolution | 7... | 80 |
| Rainbow Six 3 | 7... | 84 |
| Rapala Pro Fishing | 6... | 90 |
| Ratchet & Clank: UYA | 10... | 97 |
| Red Dead Revolver | 8... | 88 |
| Resident Evil: Outbreak | 7... | 88 |
| Ribbit King | 6... | 68 |
| Rise To Honor | 7... | 82 |
| Robotech: Invasion | 7... | 80 |
| Rocky: Legends | 6... | 68 |
| Romance of 3 Kingdoms IX | 7... | 80 |
| Second Sight | 8... | 90 |
| Sega Superstars | 7.5... | 93 |
| Serious Sam: Next Encounter | 8... | 90 |
| Seven Samurai 20XX | 8... | 88 |
| Shadow Hearts: Covenant | 10... | 90 |
| Shadow Of Rome | 7.5... | 88 |
| Shark Tale | 6.5... | 72 |
| Shellshock: Nam '67 | 8... | 90 |
| Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne | 7.5... | 92 |
| Showdown: LOW | 8... | 86 |
| Shrek 2 | 6... | 80 |
| Silent Hill 4: The Room | 8... | 90 |
| The Sim's Bustin' Out | 7... | 80 |
| Simple 2000 | 6... | 68 |
| Smash Court PT2 | 7... | 80 |
| Sonic Heroes | 7... | 80 |
| Sonic Mega Collection Plus | 7... | 80 |
| Spawn: Armageddon | 7... | 80 |
| Spider-Man 2 | 7... | 80 |
| Splinter Cell | 9... | 96 |
| SpongeBob SquarePants | 7... | 80 |
| SpongeBob SquarePants | 8... | 92 |
| Spy Fiction | 8... | 88 |
| Spy Hunter 2 | 8... | 80 |
| Spyro: A Hero's Tale | 8.5... | 92 |
| Star Ocean TTEOT | 8.5... | 91 |
| Star Trek: SU | 8... | 82 |
| Star Wars Battlefront | 8... | 88 |
| Street Fighter AC | 8... | 88 |
| Street Racing Syndicate | 7... | 80 |
| Strike Force Bowling | 6... | 68 |
| The Suffering | 8... | 92 |
| Syphon Filter: OS | 7... | 80 |
| Taiko Drum master | 7... | 80 |
| Tak 2: Staff Of Dreams | 5... | 68 |
| Tak And The Power Of Juju | 7... | 80 |
| Technic Beat | 6... | 68 |
| Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles | 8... | 88 |
| Terminator 3: ROTM | 5... | 68 |
| Terminator 3: The Redemption | 7... | 80 |
| Test Drive: Eve Of Destruction | 7... | 80 |
| THUG 2: World Destruction Tour | 8... | 88 |
| Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005 | 8... | 90 |
| Time Crisis: Crisis Zone | 8... | 90 |
| TOCA Race Driver 2 | 7... | 80 |
| Tokyo Extreme Racer 3 | 5... | 80 |
| Tony Hawk's Underground | 8... | 90 |
| TMNT2: Battle Nexus | 6... | 91 |
| Transformers | 8... | 80 |
| True Crime: Streets of LA | 8... | 80 |
| Ty 2: Bush Rescue | 7... | 91 |
| UFC: Sudden Impact | 4... | 68 |
| Under the Skin | 8... | 90 |
| The Urbz | 8... | 92 |
| Van Helsing | 8... | 87 |
| Vietcong: Purple Haze | 5... | 82 |
| Viewtiful Joe | 9... | 96 |
| Viewtiful Joe 2 | 9... | 96 |
| Virtual On: Marz | 8... | 80 |
| Virtua Quest | 6... | 68 |
| Way Of The Samurai 2 | 8... | 80 |
| Whiplash | 6... | 80 |
| Winning Eleven 7 | 9... | 90 |
| World Pool 2004 | 7... | 80 |
| Worms 3D | 6... | 82 |
| Wrath Unleashed | 7... | 82 |
| WTS 2005 | 5... | 80 |
| WWE Smackdown! vs. Raw | 8... | 91 |
| The X-Files | 6... | 68 |
| XIII | 7... | 80 |
| X-Men Legends | 7.5... | 92 |
| Yu-Gi-Oh! GMC | 8... | 90 |
| Yu-Yu Hakusho: DT | 8... | 88 |
| ESPN Baseball | 7... | 84 |
| ESPN College Hoops 2K5 | 9... | 92 |
| ESPN NBA 2K5 | 9... | 94 |
| ESPN NFL 2K5 | 8... | 90 |
| ESPN NHL 2K5 | 8... | 90 |
| Euro 2004 | 7... | 86 |
| EverQuest OA: Frontiers | 8... | 81 |
| EyeToy: AntiGrav | 7... | 82 |
| EyeToy Groove | 6... | 84 |
| The Fairly Oddparents | 6... | 68 |
| Fallout: BOS | 8... | 88 |
| Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly | 8... | 88 |
| FIFA Soccer 2005 | 8... | 90 |
| Fight Club | 6... | 68 |
| Fight Night 2004 | 8... | 88 |
| Final Fantasy X-2 | 8... | 88 |
| Final Fantasy XI | 8... | 88 |
| Final Fantasy XI: COP | 8... | 88 |
| Firefighter F.D. 18 | 6... | 68 |

**"*Star Wars: Battlefront* is an awesome game, but hotter than Leia in her harem girl outfit? Hmm... maybe not."** —Alex Eveland, Florida

## MY TOP 5 Action Games

**By Ben Kirchman, Brooksville, FL**

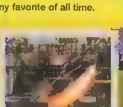
Sometimes, you want racing; sometimes you want role-playing. And sometimes, just sometimes, you're in the mood to do a little exploring and a whole lot of tearing some clown a new one.

### 5 War of the Monsters

It's retro, has awesome visuals and a cool cast of look-alike monsters, and you can level entire cities. Nothing wrong here!

### 4 Onimusha: Warlords

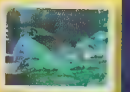
Although short, this early PlayStation 2 game's graphics could not be beat, and the CG cinemas are still my favorite of all time.



### 3 Contra: Shattered Soldier

Although I still have yet to beat it, I play this hard-as-nails game constantly, and have perfected almost every level.

### 2 Legacy of Kain: Defiance



It has an awesome fighting system, great, gothically-themed graphics, and a time traveling plot that is totally cool.

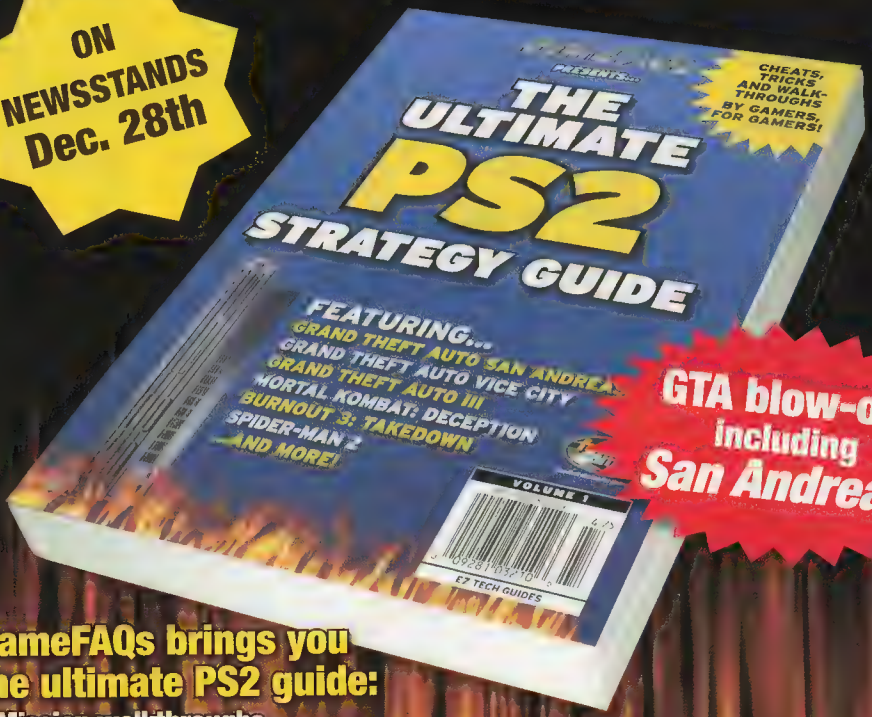
### 1 Onimusha2: Samurai's Destiny

It has an awesome cast of good guys, an even cooler bad guy, and awesome graphics. What exactly is there not to love?

Get your own Top 5 list to share with the world? Just point your browser to gamefan.com and tell us about it — be sure to include your pic and hometown!

# Eight *hot* PS2 games. One huge guide.

ON NEWSSTANDS Dec. 28th




GTA blow-out including San Andreas!

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future games

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The Iksar Shaman is primarily a spell caster, but when one of those spells is Giant Growth, they can still hold their own when things get physical.

# CHAMPIONS: RETURN TO ARMS

## BADASS 101

Here are some suggestions about how to maximize each character type's potential, straight from the developer.

### IKSAR SHAMAN

A cold-blooded mix of caster and melee fighter, though they cannot wield ranged weapons.

**IDEAL ABILITIES:**

**Giant Growth** — Enlarges the character up to double in size and weapon damage.

**Summon Badger** — Like the Shadow Knight's skeletons, this pet delivers added damage when things are good and provides a nice distraction when you need to run.

**Planar Wind** — A very powerful ability at high levels. It costs a ton of mana, but does huge damage to all creatures in your path.

**FIGHTING TIPS:** Iksar are casters first and fighters second. When faced with big, brawny large foes like Rallos Zek or the Cyclopes, it is best to keep your distance. Abilities like Poison Bolt or Tagar's Insects are good to slow down or stun your opponent, and a summoned badger makes a great blocker.

### VAH SHIR BERSERKER

Bad kitty! A variation on the barbarian with the added ability to summon throwing axes, you won't find these tigers on a cereal box.

**IDEAL ABILITIES:**

**Fire Axe and Cold Axe** — Very helpful for wearing down the enemy before they get within melee range.

**Battle Cry** — Enables the Vah Shir to move much faster and gives them a chance to stun an opponent.

**Berserker Rage** — Increases attack speed and amount of damage, but it only kicks in when you are below 50% health, so be careful trying to overuse this one.

**FIGHTING TIPS:** The well-rounded Vah Shir are skilled at both ranged and melee combat. When facing strong opponents, the Vah Shir does best by wearing the enemy down with throwing axes, then charging in to finish the job at close range.

### BARBARIAN WARRIOR

Not much for magic, this strong, stout warrior prefers to grab the biggest weapon around and remind adversaries where the phrase "hacking and slashing" came from.

**IDEAL ABILITIES:**

**Strong Stance** — Prevents the Barbarian from being knocked down by those annoying monsters, thereby making his guard nearly impenetrable.

**Dual Wield and Critical Hit** — A powerful combination when locked in head to head combat, especially for those with a large pool of hit points.

**Cyclone** — Carves out a nice chunk of breathing room for you when surrounded by enemies on all sides.

**FIGHTING TIPS:** Barbarians are completely "in your face" type of fighters. Keep a healthy stack of potions handy and charge in. Don't forget your abilities that can stun large opponents and the area damages when you have multiple monsters attacking.

### WOOD ELF RANGER

Don't call these deceptively benign-looking archers "tree huggers" — they'll shred you with withering arrow fire before you can get within ten yards of them.

**IDEAL ABILITIES:**

**Ice Arrow** — A great way to slow down the enemy, giving you more time to pump them full of even more arrows.

**Penetrating Arrow** — A new ability that can do some serious damage and allows you to hit those annoying monsters who try to block every shot.

**Summon Arrows** — Your new best friend. No longer will your Ranger need to make trips to the "shop" to replenish the empty quiver.

**Dual Wield and Critical Hit** — An optional set for players who have trouble keeping their distance.

**FIGHTING TIPS:** Keep your enemies slowed with Ice Arrow, and don't be shy about using Multi-fire when you (or your party) are greatly outnumbered. With Critical hit and Dual

Wield, the Ranger can also hold his/her own in close combat.

### HIGH ELF CLERIC

A finesse class gifted with a wide range of magical attacks, useful buffs, and a few physical gifts, these

The Cleric is a great class, especially for skilled users who know how to get the most from their special abilities.

regal-looking, elven caster/fighters can kill you any number of ways — but they can't use edged weapons.

**IDEAL ABILITIES:**

**Convert Enemy** — A great ability when you have a mass of monsters in the vicinity.

**Blessed** — Increases Mana Regeneration, a vital part of keeping your Cleric in a constant state of readiness.

**Retribution** — A new ability that gives health back to your Cleric when damaging other creatures.

**FIGHTING TIPS:**

Avoid melee combat unless absolutely necessary. The Cleric does get some very nice armor and can use a shield, but cannot inflict much damage via melee weapons. Your skills are the key: stun enemies with Blinding Light or hold them in place with Root. Of course, Converting Enemies to your side is the best way to get the job done with the least amount of effort.

### ERUDITE WIZARD

Ever since *Gauntlet*, the Wizard has been known as the frail character who wields devastating offensive magic. This is no exception.

**IDEAL ABILITIES:**

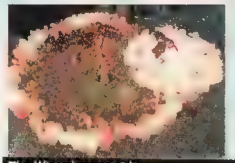
**Fire Flares** — What's better than a roving shield of Fireballs that do a tremendous amount of damage? Nothing, that's what.

**Battle Mage** — A new ability that allows the Wizard to use bladed (slashing) weapons, though it'll take a few points to get their damage up to par.

**Shock** — An early ability that proves useful for a long time. Shock can significantly damage many targets.

**FIGHTING TIPS:**

Don't get hit. Wizards have the lowest AC (armor class) and fewest hit points of all of the characters. Root comes in handy when you encounter large groups of monsters. Use the different abilities that can damage multiple



The Wizard may not have many hit points, but their magic's sheer destruction can make it tough to get close enough to get a shot in.

opponents with one cast, try to find weapons and armor that help mana regeneration, and keep plenty of mana potions handy.

### DARK ELF SHADOWKNIGHT

PSM's favorite class, the Shadowknight is a versatile anti-paladin who can wield any weapon in the game with ease, and wields some very useful spells as well.

**IDEAL ABILITIES:**

**Disease Bolt** — a handy spell early on in a Shadowknight's adventuring, which tracks its target at higher levels.

**Engulfing Darkness** — Very good for confusing enemies when you're overwhelmed or outnumbered, leaving them defenseless to your attacks.

**Summon Skeleton** — Does fair damage, but most effective when used to distract an enemy so you can get a few hits in or flee.

**FIGHTING TIPS:**

Use your disease abilities constantly in conjunction with your melee weapon of choice. Having a pet skeleton around can be a helpful distraction when squaring off against a large monster.

## FEBRUARY PSM CHALLENGE

**RULES** You can only send an entry for *one* challenge. If you cheat or use codes, you'll be disqualified and bring shame upon your house. The final contest entry will be accepted on March 1st. If there are multiple qualifying entries, the winner will be decided by the best paragraph that explains why *you* should the winner. Send a photo or a videotape (non-returnable) proving you've met the challenge, and your short paragraph explaining why you're the winner. *Sorry, no e-mail entries!* This contest is open only to residents of the United States, age 18 years or older. PSM reserves the right to substitute prizes of equal or greater monetary value, if necessary.

**SEND YOUR ENTRIES TO:**
PSM February Challenge # (the challenge you're entering)
c/o Future Network USA,
150 North Hill Drive, Ste. 40
Brisbane, CA 94005

**Challenge #1: Mercenaries**
Fill out your deck of 52 most wanted criminals and prove to us you've dealt every card.

**Challenge #2: Pinball Hall Of Fame**
Get on our favorite table: Black Hole, and show us your highest score.

**Challenge #3: Suikoden IV**
Show us the ending of this game, and make sure you've shown us that you've gathered all of the 108 stars.

**NOVEMBER WINNERS**

**Second Sight**
Alice Willtern, Little Rock, AR

**Juiced** No winner possible

**Hot Shots Golf: Fore!**
Mike Jorgenson, Garland, TX

**November [illegible] will receive:**
*Def Jam: [illegible]*
*TMNT 2:*
*Katamari Damacy,*
*Phantom Brave t-shirt*

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SUPER-PLAY

# PSM THUNDERDROME!

For **Chris Slate,** videogames aren't just a job — they're also a great way to impose your iron will upon your humble subjects. Thus, every month, the PSM editors enter the **THUNDERDROME** to prove that they have what it takes to call themselves hardcore... and to amuse Chris, who has been known at times to wear a thong... don't ask us when!

## This month in the Thunderdrome:

# Rumble Roses

**Chris:** Hear me, underlings! Cease your unimportant prattle. It is time once again for you to enter the Thunderdrome... and this month, you're going to do it in a wrestling ring while pretending to be hot babes who fight a lot. You're playing *Rumble Roses*. So, go get your bikinis on, and get ready to get muddy! Figuratively speaking, of course. Wait — where did Randy just go?

**Justin:** I don't know, but he was mumbling something about a thong... if this goes badly, I'm blaming you.

### Round One:
**Eric (0-0) as Aisha vs.**
**Justin (0-0) as Candy Cane**

**Eric:** Hey, you're the wrestling whiz. Why do you think it is that sometimes when I hit Ⓐ, it grapples, but sometimes it just Irish Whips you?

**Justin:** It has to do with the direction you're pressing along with Ⓐ. Up is a top grapple, down a low grapple, either side a middle grapple. And just plain Ⓐ is the whip.

**Eric:** Oh, that's right. I win! Wow, that was quick. Did you throw that match?

**Justin:** No, but I did miscalculate. I kept trying to counter your grabs and strikes, and you just kept coming relentlessly, so a lot of them got through. Nice work softening me up with strikes before the grapples, by the way. That's good wrestling.

**Winner: Eric**

### Round Two:
**Eric: (1-0) as Dixie vs.**
**Justin (0-1) as Anesthesia**

**Justin:** Wow, these moves are really elaborate. I just pressed maybe two buttons and dished out a ten or twelve-second move.

**Eric:** With a whole lot of cheesecake for dessert. These girls aren't shy, are they?

**Justin:** As a healthy, red-blooded male, I don't really object to that, but they do have some pride — you'll notice some moves make little hearts fly up into heart-shaped meter up in the corner. That means the girl got embarrassed.

**Eric:** I see. Maybe she shouldn't have worn such a revealing outfit then.

**Justin:** Spoken like a true married man. You know, I kind of hate the voices. I never imagined I would have a chance during my lifetime to say this, but... why won't I shut up?

**Eric:** I agree. However, I really like how, once you've connected on enough attacks to fill that yellow bar, you can easily pull off a Lethal Move. I'd prefer if it were me doing it to you, though. You rock this

round — have you changed your strategy?

**Justin:** Tons. The first round, I was constantly trying to counter your moves, and you just slapped me silly. Obviously, counters aren't as important in this game as they are in some wrestling titles. This time, I've taken a more offensive mindset. It seems like the person who gets in the first strike usually gains command for a good thirty seconds or so.

**Winner: Justin**

## Round Three:

**Mad Mud Match**

**Eric: (1-1) as Anesthesia vs. Justin (1-1) as Dixie**

**Eric:** Okay, Miss Tough Guy, let's switch characters.

**Justin:** Are you sure? Anesthesia's a pretty advanced submission fighter, and Dixie is clearly better for beginners... like you.

**Eric:** Just hit the mud, fella. Hey! No fair. Did you just hit me with a riding crop? Where did that come from?

**Justin:** Sometimes weapons are hidden in the corners. Just go there and press ◎ to look. For instance, I just found an oar. Let's see if I can choke you with it.

**Eric:** Ack... How... gack... nautical!

**Justin:** Now, down to the mud with you. This is going to hurt.

**Eric:** Whoa! I just disappeared almost completely. This isn't mud — it's chocolate milk! Let me up! I'm gonna drown!

**Justin:** That's 'cause it's not just mud. It's MAD mud. Hey, nice reversal! Now, what are you doing climbing up that lifeguard tower?

**Eric:** Geronimo! Take that! And that! And That! Man, first I thump you from on high, and then give you high heels to the face. These girls really aren't very nice...

**Randy:** Okay guys. The underwires in this bikini top are poking me and this thong is downright breezy, but I'm ready to wrestle.

**Eric:** Aaagh! My eyes! My EYES!

**Justin:** Oh, you picked a really bad time to let go of the controller. You know that heart-shaped meter that fills slightly every time an attack embarrasses a wrestler? I've landed so many that yours is full... Let me show you what a Humiliation move looks like... and you're done.

**Eric:** No fair! Interference!

**Justin:** You would have lost anyhow. Face it: you are one lousy bikini mud wrestler.

**Eric:** No, I'm no ... Yeah, you know, when you say it like that, I can't argue.

This month's winner: Justin

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SUPER-PLAY

# INSIDE OUT

**Every month, we track down the people behind our favorite games and take one last, no-holds-barred look at how they turned out. This month our guest is BRIAN HASTINGS, Chief Creative Officer for Insomniac *Games* and one of the brains behind *Ratchet & Clank: UYA*.**

**PSM: Let's talk first about Ratchet himself. Once and for all: what exactly IS he? What was his character creation process like?**
**BH:** You'd be surprised how often we get asked this. Have people never seen a Lombax before?

Ratchet evolved from an alien character originally inspired by Marvin the Martian. He started out much more alien-like, and gradually became more furry and friendly looking.

**PSM: Can you tell us about any planned levels or game types that didn't quite make the cut, and maybe why they were excised?**
**BH:** Early in the project, we had been experimenting with a pretty cool new mode of space combat based on the *Star Fox* series. But we weren't 100 percent happy with the controls of the ship, and after several passes on it without getting quite where we wanted, we decided to punt.

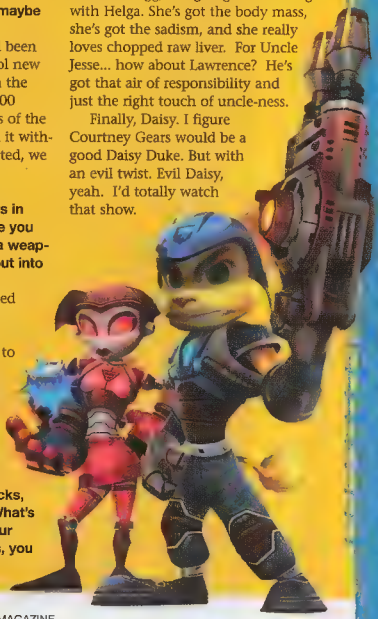
**PSM: The weapons and gadgets in *R&C* are simply awesome. Have you ever come up with an idea for a weapon or gadget that you DIDN'T put into the game?**
**BH:** One of the ones that got axed from the original *R&C* was the "Driller." It was a kind of melee weapon where you get up close to an enemy, stick him with the drill and then spin him around. Sounded good in theory, but in practice it just looked pretty whack.

**PSM: Okay. We've seen black sheep, white sheep, regular ducks, flaming ducks, and chickens. What's the next barnyard animal on your hit list? Eric is very fond of pigs, you know...**
**BH:** I'm afraid that's our most closely guarded secret. We have requests for platypuses, but we just haven't been able to support the duck-billed technology yet.

**PSM: Okay, here's the situation: You're reviving a classic TV show and using the cast of *Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal*. Which TV show would you revive, and who would play what parts?**
**BH:** I'm thinking the *Dukes of Hazzard*. Ratchet would be Bo Duke, the brash one who does all the driving. Clank would be Luke Duke, the smart and mild-mannered one who rides shotgun. Big Al would fit the bill for Cooter the mechanic.

For Rosco P. Coltrane, how about Skidd McMarxx? He's got Roscoe's cluelessness and incompetence factor, but you can't help but like him. Now, for Boss Hogg, I'm going to have to go with Helga. She's got the body mass, she's got the sadism, and she really loves chopped raw liver. For Uncle Jesse... how about Lawrence? He's got that air of responsibility and just the right touch of uncle-ness.

Finally, Daisy. I figure Courtney Gears would be a good Daisy Duke. But with an evil twist. Evil Daisy, yeah. I'd totally watch that show.



## TESTER CHALLENGES

This page and eight thousand more just like it are what stand between you and the finished game. Even if you get the first copy of the game ever sent, they'll have already played it for *hundreds* of hours. They are the most skilled gamers in the world — they are the Tester Taskers. Think you can play at their level?

### RATCHET & CLANK: UYA

TESTERS: The *R&C:UYA* Team, led by Ed Kho

"Only a true *RC:UYA* master could complete these difficult challenges. Some of them even made us want to point a Shock Blaster at ourselves."

**Armor is for Sissies**
Complete the game without ever buying any new armor. That means you and your Alpha Omega Sector are going to be best friends. You can use the Nano-Pak, but even it contains armor that'll need to be bolted.

**Batman doesn't have a gun**
Any one, level, that gives you all of the game weapons. But can you do it using only the Groovitron, Nanotron, Pixelizer, Trespasser, Decoy, Inspector, N-60, and Suck Cannon? That will take real skill, kids! You can also use the PS4.

**Skill Points The Hard Way**
Complete the game on the MEC Quest using the "First Person" control type.

**Qwarktastic Records**
Complete each level as fast as you can. Your times will be compared to those of the Qwark Quest Team. Try beating these times:

Qwark 1 - 2:00
Qwark 2 - 1:30
Qwark 3 - 1:30
Qwark 4 - 2:00
Qwark 5 - 1:40

**L33T Hacker**
As you can complete the Hacker challenges without breaking a sweat. By completing all the Insomniac Hacker puzzles in the Insomniac Museum and after another method taking seconds.

**Melee Madness!**
Some melee type opponents and bosses can be "stunned" by a single hit, but did they ever need troopers to hit and knock the squirm out of a Tyhrranoid? To become one with yourself and the universe, you must become a master of the fine art of kicking and screaming with only your wrench. Beat the following levels on their hardest setting using only the wrench.
- Starship Phoenix Under Attack
- Zeldrin Starport
- Zeldrin Quest: Run
- Kerwa, Metropolis Way

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# STICKING POINTS

## When you're stumped on "that one spot"

### The Getaway: Black Monday

You don't have to be stuck to want to see the "best" ending. To get it, you need to do two things.

At the beginning of Chapter 13, when Sam gives you the option to stay or go, stay in the car and drive back to the bank.

Second, in Chapter 18, you have to save the reporter, Jackie Philips. Once you've beaten Yuri, head for the stairs and make sure you run up to the left side of the broken section of catwalk. If the catwalk collapses without a cut scene of Eddie saving Jackie, you'll have to restart and try again.

### ATV Off Road Fury 3

So, things were going fine, but now you've hit a wall (figuratively speaking, of course) and can't seem to come in first? It's probably a problem with your air time. As with all previous *ATV Off Road* titles, the make-or-break skill is accurately timed and spaced jumps — come down on the wrong side of a landing ramp, and you're out of the race. There's no magic bullet here either, folks, just practice, practice, practice.

## THE POINT: KILLZONE

**PSM loved it, but a lot of folks hated it. What's your take?**

# CHEATER, CHEATER!

### Mega Man X8

**Codes are entered from the Title Screen (where it says "Press Start").**

Sigma Blade
L3 L3 R3 L3 L3 R3 L3 L3 R3 L3 L3 R3
Cut Man
←⊙↑⊙↓⊗→⊙▭▭▭▭
Alia
↓▭↑▭⊙⊗⊙⊙
Layer
⊙⊙→⊗▭

### The Incredibles

**AthletesFoot**
The character's feet leave fire trails.

**BoAPlace**
Makes the game 20% easier.
**BWTheMovie**
The game is played in slow motion.
**DanDruff**
Makes the henchmen launch their shrapnel all the time (any time they get hit, and any time they bounce).
**Flexible**
Mrs. Incredible get infinite super power for a limited time.
**Gilgendash**
Dash does not receive damage when he runs into things or from friction.
**Labombe**
Bombs are weakened.
**Showtime**
Mr. Incredible gets super power for a limited time.

### Yu-Yu Hakusho Dark Tournament

**Cheat Code unlock screen.**

↑↓⊗⊙⊙→
Unlock all Chapters
⊙⊙⊙⊙⊙↓
Unlock all Cards
⊙↑⊙⊙↓⊙
Unlock all Skins
←→↓→⊗⊙
Unlock all Modes (survival...)
↑→←→⊗⊗
Unlock all Environments
⊙⊗⊙⊙⊗⊙
Free Spirit Energy P1
↓↑⊙←⊗→
Free Spirit Energy P2
⊙⊙↓←⊙⊙
No Damage P1
↑⊙←⊙⊙⊙
No Damage P2
⊙⊗→⊗↑⊙
Turbo Mode

### Scaler

**All codes are entered as follows: Enter the PAUSE Menu, select the AUDIO option, and quickly perform one of the following combos. If successful, a confirmation text will appear on screen.**

Gain 200,000 Klokkies
⊙⊙⊙⊙⊙⊙⊙⊙
Regain Health:
⊙▭⊙▭⊙⊙⊙⊙▭⊙
Unlimited Electric Bombs:
⊙⊙▭⊙⊙⊙⊙

# HOMEGROWN

**Get extra mileage from games you already have with these bonus challenges!**

## Dragonball Z Budokai

**Submitted by Adam Robertson and James Broskey**

"You know that copy of *DBZ Budokai* (any of the three will do) that's collecting dust in the corner? Whip it out. Go through the game with every character using only punches, kicks and energy blasts... or maybe just punches and kicks, and nothing else."

## Grand Theft Auto

**Submitted by Scott K.**

"In all three *Grand Theft Auto* games, I pretend that I work for a car magazine and have to drive the fastest cars through all kinds of tests (0-60, accident avoidance, emergency braking etc). Then, I write up Consumer Reports-type comparisons.

**"Welcome to 'Which Ride Should I Jack?' This week, we'll be testing the penetrability of various vehicles' driver's side doors to .45 rounds fired from say, an Uzi."**

Got a good idea for a made-up mission that helps you get more out of your games? Well, don't be stingy with it — share the love at **psmonline.com** and we might print your challenge right here!

# TRUE TALES OF ONLINE GAMING!

AW, SON OF A -- DIDN'T I TELL YOU SPARKY NEEDED TO GO OUT?
WERE YOU TOO BUSY WATCHING ME CLEAN IN TIGHT LEATHER TO DO IT YOURSELF?
Kiara

I was playing *Everquest Online Adventures*, and there was this girl whom I was always grouped with. One day, she asked me to marry her.

I wanted to play along to get out the full "role playing experience" so I said "Yes!"

[illegible] asked me where I [illegible] wanted to get married. [illegible] asked me to write her name [illegible] two days later she said "Okay, I am ready." I answered, I ask "For what?"

After hesitating for a moment, she answered "To have children!" And so ended Jason's adventure [illegible] days [illegible].

**Jason Dye, Riverside County, CA**

Got a great true online gaming story? Then get on over to psmonline.com and email it to us, beyotch! We'll print our favorites right here each and every month.

# Caption Contest

**Make us laugh, win a prize!**

Think you're funny, huh? Like a *clown*, like you *amuse* us? Cool! Then write down a caption for this screen and email it to us at psm@futurenetworkusa.com, with the subject line "94 Caption Contest!" Or, simply send it to us through the SuperPlay section of our website at **psmonline.com**. If we choose your caption as the funniest, it'll net you a PSM Prize Package full of random PlayStation goodies. Just be sure to include your full name and mailing address, or your loot gets sent to The Spoiler.

# THE BIG BREAK

**Tips so good, they almost break the game.**

Take the disc out of your PS2 when playing *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* — the alarms won't work. — **Radoslaw Lemiesz**

WARNING! READ AT YOUR OWN RISK!

HUNGRY?

HOW ABOUT SOME SOYLENT GREEN? IT'S PEOPLE!

HA! THE SPOILER STRIKES AGAIN!

# THE SPOILER PAGE

**Hello PSM readers, and welcome to The Spoiler page! I am your host, The Spoiler, a man who does not know the meaning of the word "veridicality"... nor the definitions of the words "secret" or "taboo."**

**Here, we will discuss whatever we please: who lives, who dies, how a game ends, what a game's plot is... anything at all. So BE WARNED! If you read this page, you may learn something you *didn't* want to know...**

## JAK 3

### Should these two call it quits?

Okay — at the end of Jak's latest adventure, he's saved Haven City (for good, this time), he's learned who his father was, tied up all the loose ends from all three games, and tongue-rassled with the lovely Ashlyn. His partner Daxter has turned down his one and only chance to go back to being his old self in exchange for a pair of pants, and he's got his own Daxter-type fuzzy orange girlfriend. The storyline concludes, and everyone in the Jak universe could retire and live happily ever after... so, will they? Should they?

Granted, this story is pretty much done, but seeing as how Jak turns down a chance to explore the universe with the Precursors to stay and continue adventuring with Daxter, there's room for sequels. So, it could go both ways — either Jak goes down in history as one of the all-time great game trilogies, or it starts fresh with all new storylines and continues on.

Which would you prefer? Naughty Dog, the creators of Jak will most likely start work on totally new projects for PlayStation 3. That means another development team would be taking the series over — and considering how Vivendi has ground the Naughty Dog-less *Crash Bandicoot* series into Has-Been-dom (ditto with the Insomniac-created *Spyro* series), this sounds kinda scary to us. Then again, that also brings up an important difference: Sony would retain control of any future Jak games. Personally, I'd vote to end the series as a trilogy; no PS2 Jak, no PS3 Jak, not even PSP Jak. Of course, we already know there's a 90% chance that there are more Jak games on the way (though not developed by Naughty Dog), so the argument is a bit moot at this point. Still, the Spoiler wants to know your thoughts. Write to you think? Should these three Jak games be last so Sandy can start over? Go to www.psmonline.com to tell us what you think, and we'll put your comments right here in this space for Sony and Naughty Dog to see.

DUDES, I'M RETIRED! IT'LL BE A COLD DAY IN HELL BEFORE I STAR IN ANOTHER... OH CRAP IS THIS SNOW?

## THE END Ghosthunter

### Face it: not all of us finish every game we play. Here's what you missed.



For such a cool game, *Ghosthunter* has a kinda lame final act. Hawksmoor throws waves of enemies at you, which you mow down with the new Tech Gun. He then comes after you himself, but you can just stand still and just sort of drop.

With Hawksmoor more or less defeated, Richmond has a sappy moment with his digital alter ego, the robot. He then triggers his device to destroy the facility and all ghosts within. Cue "noble sacrifice to redeem flawed character" music here.

Lazarus and Anna manage to make it out through the portal, but we never do find out what happened to Kate/Astrail. This is the worst thing about the ending — you hang with this spirit hottie the whole game, you wanna know she's okay, y'know?

Lazarus claims his second sight is gone, and he and Anna decide to make up a story and never tell anyone. "It never happened," Anna chuckles. We're guessing she mentally adds "and neither will the thing you're thinking of right now, you perverted Barney Fife." Roll credits.

# PSM ONLINE

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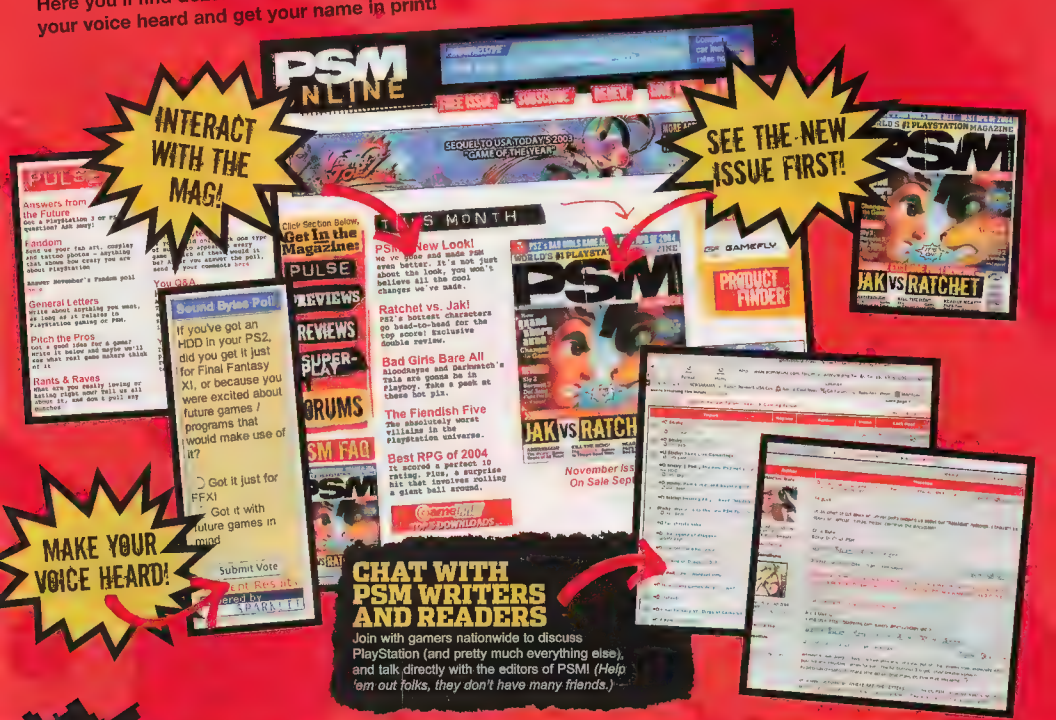
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## LOOK FOR US ONLINE!

# METAL GEAR LOVE CONNECTION

SPOILER ALERT!

Yep, love *can* bloom on the battlefield — a *lot.*

**SNAKE** The original Snake only had a few days to prevent nuclear war, but he still found time to slip in a little lovin'. He never seemed as comfortable with women as he did with his gun, though.

**EVA** During the mission, this chesty temptress hooks up with Snake, Sokolov, Volgin, and possibly even more...!

**SOKOLOV** Eva poses as this scientist's wife, and presumably goes "undercover" to make the role seem legit.

**VOLGIN** While he's not planning world domination, Volgin trades passionate nights with Eva and Raikov. Kuwabara, dudes!

**BOSS** After a fling with The Sorrow, she shares a relationship with Snake that "goes beyond love."

**FIDO** Eva talks suggestively in her sleep about Snake, Boss and... *Fido?!* We thought *Otacon* was a freak!

**RAIKOV** He apparently has a relationship with Volgin that's so close, the big russian can spot him by his bulge.

**THE SORROW** Good news: he gets busy with Boss in her younger days. Bad news: she kills him. Love sucks, huh?

**OCELOT** At first glance, Ocelot doesn't appear to get any lovin' in either the 60s or present day. However...

**LIQUID SNAKE** In *MGS2*, Liquid's *right hand* gets attached to Ocelot. *(Figure it out yourself.)*

**RAIDEN** Despite the constant whining and androgynous looks, Raiden has a pretty hot girlfriend.

**ROSE** She sticks with boy-toy Raiden even though he's a bit psycho and won't let her into his room.

**MEI LING, NAOMI & NATASHA** These three ladies are recipients of the legendary "Snake Charm" — otherwise known as work-related sexual harassment.

**VAMP** I guess, if you're a vampire, living for hundreds of years gives you a different perspective on things. So...

**OTACON** While he isn't busy building or destroying Metal Gears, this dude is one grade-A superfreak...

**SOLID SNAKE** He catches a peek of Meryl in her undies, and depending on the ending you get, he either rides off into the sunset with her or, erm, Otacon.

**SCOTT DOLPH** ...Maybe that explains why he had a torrid affair with Colonel Scott Dolph, then...

**FORTUNE** ...Shacked up with Dolph's daughter, Fortune. All together, now: *eeewwwww.*

**THE STEPMOM** First, Otacon has an affair with his *stepmom,* which causes his dad to kill imself...

**SNIPER WOLF** Years later, he crushes on this homicidal maniac. Dude, Yahoo Personals — look into it.

**MERYL** She may be green in battle, but Snake likes the way she wiggles when she walks.

## NEXT ISSUE

Our PSP coverage this issue was just the beginning! We're going to spend the **next 30 days** putting our new portable playpals through absolute hell, so we'll have plenty more **impressions** for you next ish. We'll also have the first official details on the **U.S. launch** of the PSP, including what games you can expect on day one and much more. For PS2, we're chasing down stacks of cool new games as I write this! See you next month!

MORE PSP IN 30!

# Chart a Course for Adventure

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# Suikoden IV
幻想水滸伝

TEEN
T
Mild Language
Suggestive Themes
Use of Alcohol
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PlayStation.2

KONAMI
www.konami.com/usa

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## 44 B.C. ROMAN EMPIRE

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MATURE 17+
M
Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

CAPCOM PlayStation.2

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